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"NO CAB TO BE HAD," SHE ECHOED, HER EYES DILATING WITH HORROR. "OH! MR. GLYN, CAN WE WALK!"

MADELINE GRANT.

CHAPTER I.

In one of the largest and most fashionable suburbs of a commercial town in the north-west of England (and which we will call River Bank), there is to this very day a most superior establishment for young ladies, kept by Mrs. Penn and her two daughters and competent assistants—vide the prospectus.

It is a genteel, secluded residence, standing in its own grounds (of one acre in extent), enclosed by an exclusive high brick wall, and is built in imitation of the Elizabethan style on a humble scale; but the symmetry of its proportions are spoiled by a long, low building jutting out at one side, that might be taken by an inexperienced eye for anything—from a row of stabling to a billiard-room—but is, in reality, the scene of Mrs. Penn's scholastic labours, erected at her own expense—in short, the schoolroom.

This apartment is lighted by four windows, the lower half of which are muffled glass; the floor is bare of carpet, the walls decorated

with maps. Deaks, forms, a very ancient piano, and a very high wire fender comprise all its furniture, ornamental or otherwise, unless we include two young ladies who are sitting at one of the far deaks, making the most of the time at their disposal whilst the boarders are out for their usual walk.

One of these young people has piteously pleaded "a cold," and thus escaped the hateful service; the other is that nondescript article, a pupil-teacher, and is fulfilling a part of her duty, and diligently darning the "little ones" socks, whilst her companion, with both elbows on the deak, both hands in her ruffled hair, watches her and talks.

"This must be perfectly awful for you, Maddie, dear," she was saying. "Don't you loathe it all and wish you could run away? I should, if I were you!"

"Run away—what nonsense, Flo! Where could I go to, even supposing for a moment such an idea had entered my head, which it never did? You forget that I have no friends in England; and, after all, I am not so much to be pitied as you imagine!" darning steadily all the time.

"If you are not, I should like to know, who is!" exclaimed her schoolfellow, emphatically. "Here you are, one day at the top of the tree—the head of the first class—the best pupil Herr Müller had, adored by the Pennies—(N.B.—Here Miss Blount alluded to her respected instructresses)—always exquisitely dressed, with heaps of pocket-money, sleeping in the best room, allowed every extra, a fire in winter, eggs, marmalade, and I don't know what; and after years of this, and you nearly finished, your father stops the supplies. You are not paid for for two whole half-years, and the hateful Pennies make you into a regular drudge—a pupil teacher! a nursery governess! a servant! You sleep in the attic with those odious little Allens, wash and dress and teach them; you go messages to the shops, you mend and darn and teach!" She paused, breathless.

"And a very good thing that I can do something to pay for my living. If I could not sew and mend and teach, what would become of me I would be glad to know? I could hardly expect the Pennies to go on keeping me at their own expense, and now I take the fifth class—the

little ones' music—and I save a servant for those Indian children. I work for my bread—I am worth it!"

"I should think so!" put in the other, with an energetic toss of her head. "You are worth a hundred a-year to them as teacher, dressmaker, and nursery-maid all rolled into one. It makes me mad, just crazy, to see all they get out of you, early and late, and the way they treat you. Once upon a time you were their 'darling Maddie,' their 'dear bright-faced girl,' their 'model pupil'; now you are Madeline Grant, or Miss Grant, and you are slow and awkward, and careless and impertinent. Oh, dear me, dear me! Sometimes I feel as if I should like to fly at Miss Selina and bite a piece out of her—I feel so savage!"

"I hope to goodness you will restrain your feelings," said Maddie, with a smile, as she threaded a long needle of gray wool and commenced on a gaping heel. "The Penns are only human, after all. It was very hard on them, my father having failed, and all my music lessons and painting and German for last year had to be paid out of their pockets, and all my clothes. I feel hot all over when I think of the heap of money I laid out, believing it would be settled as usual by father's cheque at Christmas. There was that white dress for the breaking-up party."

"In which you made such an impression on the Wolfertons' friend, young Mr. Glyn," interpolated Florence, with a meaning nudge. "Oh, yes, I remember the white dress!"

"Don't, Flo; your elbow is like a knife!" expostulated her companion, with some discernible increase of colour. "And as to—Mr. Glyn, what you say is nonsense, and you know Mrs. Penn forbids us to speak of such things!"

"I know Mrs. Penn was very uneasy in her mind when she saw him dancing five times with you running—yes, actually running—and she came up and asked him to dance with Lizzie Flower's two red-haired sisters, as gentlemen were scarce, and her girls were not out, and so on, and then she sent him down to supper with Mrs. Browne, and she sent you off to bed, as you looked pale! Oh, yes, I saw it all; but Mr. Glyn never danced any more, but stood with his back to the wall for the rest of the evening, looking as cross as two sticks. Very likely he would never have thought of you if you had not been so plainly sent away—absence makes the heart grow fonder. Mrs. Penn put the idea into his head, making such a fuss, and has only herself to thank. He sent you those flowers. He came to our church, though Miss Selina took it all to herself—the hateful old cat!—as if he would think of her, or look at her. She took the flowers—much good may they do her!"

"Now, Flo," expostulated her friend, "how do you know they were not for her?" with a smile. "But don't let us talk about them. It is the old story."

"But I will talk about them," persisted Flo, angrily; "and I'll talk about your nice brown silk, your white dress, your winter coat, trimmed with fur, that they took away from you!"

"They paid for them, you see," rejoined Madeline, quietly. "I'm very glad they did take them; I owe them the less!"

"Thank goodness, your boots and gloves were too small," continued Flo, in a tone of fervent congratulation, "or they would have gone too. But they are rather different to the Pennies' chassie, which are of the canal-boat or schooner style!"

"Well, my dear, they did not make their own feet," said Madeline, coolly.

"How philosophical we are getting! Dear me, an old head on young shoulders. Who made their tempers, I wonder, or their tongues? Thank goodness, this is my last half and good-bye to early rising, to bread-and-scrap, to lectures and scoldings, and hot milk-and-water and rice pudding. Good-bye to Pentonville Prison—good-bye to Penns, and hurrah for liberty!" throwing up a dictionary

in the air as she spoke, and trying to catch it again, as it fell open on the face with a bang.

"That's Lucy dictionary, Flo," said the other. "You will not improve its poor back!"

"If you stay here long, Maddie, you will just become as preaching and as particular as one of the Pennies. You are tremendously sobered as it is. Who would think, to look at you, darning away so industriously, that this time last year you were the life of the school, always getting up charades and dances and mock concerts among ourselves, and carrying your point on every question, and snapping your fingers at the Pennies if they interfered with your schemes, which, to do them justice, was very seldom. Ah! my poor friend, since then what a change has come o'er the spirit of your dream! It is terrible! If you had always been a pupil-teacher it would be no matter; or if you had gone to another school, where no one knew that you had fallen from your high estate, it would not matter; but here, the scene of your triumphs—social and scholastic—to make the descent to the foot of the ladder, is—frivolous! I wonder how you can bear it so well!"

"I often wonder, too!" exclaimed Maddie, sharply, wrenching away the tears from her eyes with a great effort. "You are not going the best way to work to help me to bear my lot, Flo, raking up all these things. Bad or good, I must submit; I have no alternative,—nowhere to go until my father comes home. The best thing I can do is to be patient, and try and repay the Pennies for some of the money they have laid out on me."

"Patience!—yes. But I never could be patient," said Flo, in an aggrieved tone. "Your father has not been heard of for a whole year, has he?" she added, bluntly.

"No, he has not," acquiesced the other, sadly.

"But even if he was dead," proceeded Flo, with a fine disregard of her friend's feelings, and an open defiance of the laws of good breeding sometimes found in girls of her age, "You could not pretend to be very much out of it. You have never seen him since you were a small child—when you came home from Jamaica. He is a stranger to you."

"A stranger, certainly, in one way; but still he is my father. I have a presentiment that we shall meet again, and before long, rolling up a pair of socks as she spoke and averting her eyes from her outspoken school-fellows.

"Fool! I don't believe in presentiments. If your father had been in the land of the living you would have heard. I know I'm saying this very queerly and plainly, but it's no use beating about the bush, is it? You must face the position sooner or later."

"You mean the position of being an orphan," said Maddie, tremulously; "but I won't accept that until I have not a grain of hope left. It is very easy for you, who have your father and mother and seven brothers at home, to talk in this way. Remember that I have only one relation in the world, and when I lose him I lose all."

"Well, all I can say is that I hope your presentiment is right. I hope so. Oh, here are the girls coming back," she said, peevishly, as a long file of figures appeared, passing the windows two and two. "What a bore they are! They seem to have been only half-an-hour, and here they come tramping in, disturbing our nice comfortable little talk."

Florence Bevan, who so successfully practised the art of plain-speaking and tramping ruthlessly on other people's susceptibilities (people were welcome to trample on hers, she said; she had none), was a short, squarely-made girl of sixteen, with a sharp nose, thick brown hair, intelligent grey eyes, and a very dark skin—a skin that betrayed no tinge of foreign blood, but a decidedly brown skin.

She was brusque, eccentric, clever, and indolent.

Florence could if she would, but she so seldom would. She preferred the ease of a perennial place at the bottom of her class to ambitious, feverish battlings for the first place.

She was the only, petted daughter of a wealthy merchant and shipowner, and, being deferred to and made much of at home, was very much disposed to be both arbitrary and independent at school. Moreover, she was selfish, which is not a taking trait in a young woman's character, and was by means popular with her school-fellows.

She would borrow readily, but hated to lend, and the only thing with which she was generous was her advice. The only present she ever made anyone was her opinion—gratis.

No, Florence was not a favourite, though she had her good points. She was shrewd, clever, sincere, and once her friend always her friend.

Few were privileged by her liking, but if she had a "weakness," as she said herself, it was for Madeline Grant, the girl sitting beside her, darning away at a basketful of very hopeless-looking socks.

Madeline was born in Jamaica, but in vain you looked for olive skin and raven hair.

She was English to the tips of her fingers. Her complexion was unusually fair, of an almost dazzling whiteness.

Her colour, sometimes brilliant, sometimes faint, went and came in her cheeks at a word; her profile was perfect, her upper lip short, her eyes dark hazel, large and clear, with black brows and lashes.

Her hair was light reddish brown, thick and soft; her hands and feet unusually small.

She was above medium height, very slight and straight, and was by far the prettiest girl among Mrs. Penn's forty boarders.

She was, notwithstanding this drawback to feminine favour, the most popular girl in the school, both with masters, mistresses, and servants, and companions; her popularity had even stood that terrible test of altered circumstances, that dire fall from the wealthy West Indian heiress to the unpaid slavery of the august establishment!

Some girls tried to patronise her. They were few. They never tried it a second time.

One little foreign professor had foolishly patted her on the head, and called her "My dear" and "Ma belle." He never did it again either.

Madeline was changed, the girls said. She was prouder now than she had ever been. She was reserved, she was getting quite a grown-up air.

She held back from their advances, she abdicated of her own accord, and her place as Queen of the School was filled up, after an interregnum, by a rich cookney, who was as lavish of presents as she was economical of her h's, and who, according to Flo Bevan, was "a good, natural, vain, vulgar, poor soul."

It must not be thought that, for all the bolt front she carried, Madeline did not feel her altered circumstances very keenly. Many a bitter tear had she shed in secret, and many a sleepless hour had she lain awake when all her companions, with nothing on their minds but to-morrow's lessons, were slumbering soundly in the arms of Morpheus.

Every little indignity, every slightest little speech, entered as a very iron into her soul; but she made no sign, nor any reply or remonstrance. Her swiftly-changing colour was the only index to her feelings, and as to feelings, Mrs. Penn was a hardened old campaigner, and cared for none of these things.

Madeline was clever. Learning was easy to her, all but arithmetic, which was a knot on which she stuck fast.

Madeline was affectionate, unselfish, and proud. She had, to quote Mrs. Penn,

great force of character, an unusual individuality, and great tenacity of purpose."

But Mrs. Penn, with all her experience, had overlooked the joint in her harness: the one little weak place in the citadel, and that was, perhaps, an available failing, one that is regarded with general indulgence—to come to the point at once, and be concise.

Madeline Grant lacked moral courage. Madeline Grant could not bear to say "No."

CHAPTER II.

Two months have passed, and still no sign nor telen from Mr. Denoon Grant.

How anxiously Madeline's eyes follow Miss Selina's bony hands as they deal out the letters every morning during breakfast time!—these letters having been previously thoroughly turned over, examined, and criticised by that lady and her relatives.

It is always the same, in answer to Maddie's unspoken appeal, "No, nothing for you, Madeline," or "No letter yet, Miss Grant," according to the frame of mind in which Miss Selina found herself, and then Mrs. Penn seated herself behind a huge tin tea apparatus, would look round it with her keen little eyes and bobbing great curls, and shake her head in a manner that meant that she did not approve of her at all.

As if poor Madeline was not sick with hope deferred and a maddening desire to get away and never sleep another night under that good lady's roof, only there was one big "But," one immense drawback to her own and Mrs. Penn's eager wishes—she had nowhere else to go!

But the Misses Penn, who were fully alive to Madeline's value, were by no means equally anxious for her departure.

She corrected exercises, ruled copies, took the little ones' music (oh, agonising ordeal!), and really did as much as any two paid teachers—for nothing (ecstatic fact!); and they had, moreover, the delicious feeling that they were doing "a charitable action" all the time, and looked primly self-conscious when their friends exclaimed,—

"How good of you, you dear, kind Christian people, to keep that unfortunate West Indian girl!"

Miss Selina would softly sigh, and murmur the word "duty," when, perhaps, at that very moment the "unfortunate West Indian" was fulfilling the least agreeable of her, and getting those violent, riotous, unpleasant little Anglo-Indians to bed and to sleep.

They were too young for school routine, was spoiled, fractious, disobedient, and mischievous, and her entire charge. Happy Madeline!

It is now winter, when we once more enter the school-room at Penchester House, at Pentonville, a bitterly cold day, and the small fire behind the big screen does not quarter heat that great, large, bare room, with its many doors and windows.

These at a distance are "out in the cold," indeed, for a double file of girls is gathered closely round the screen, talking, two at a time, and making noise enough for a rookery, for this is the half-hour after tea, exclusively their own, and they are indemnifying themselves for many hours' silence and French (which almost amounted to the same thing).

Their speech is vigorous and untrammelled, for no teacher is present, except Madeline, if teacher she can be called.

She is standing at a desk under the window, mounting a drawing by the dim light of a dip candle.

The gas is never turned on in the school-room till half-past six, the twilight is so nice (so economical they meant), quoth the thrifty Miss Pennies.

The candles have been violently stirred up, and throw a good blaze, and reveal the faces and figures of the "dre-worshippers" assembled round the screen, especially the face

and figure of Isabella Carr, the present reigning potentate.

She has hitched herself up on the edge of the screen, holding herself there by the mantelpiece, and from this elevated position is dispensing law, wit, snubs, and patronage.

She is very tall, very slim, and stoops, is the proprietor of a cocked nose, quick little brown eyes, and millions of freckles; but she is also the proprietor of a thirty-guinea seal-skin, of quantities of pretty dresses, of unlimited pocket-money; also of a vast amount of self-esteem, and the largest and reddest pair of hands in the establishment!

"I say, girls," she is saying, sociably, "isn't it prime to think that ten days more we shall all be at 'oms?"

"This day fortnight where shall I be?"

Not in this academy.

Eating scraps and drinking tea;

This day fortnight where shall I be?"

she chanted in a sing-song voice, more or less through her nose.

"And there's the breaking-up dance," put in one of her satellites. "I don't want to go home till that's over."

"Law! I should 'ope not! What fun it will be, my stars!" exclaimed Miss Carr. "I 'ope there will be lots of men this time. I 'ated as much to Miss Selina. What's the good of going to the expense of supper and us all getting new frocks just for the day scholars—that's what I say?"

"What good, indeed!" put in Flo, sarcastically, as she elbowed her way to the very middle of the fire. "But do not make yourselves unhappy about the expense of supper, my dear young friends. It will not concern us. I heard Mrs. Penn say to Mademoiselle that they would not have the girls in this time gobbling up the confectionery like so many locusts."

"I did not know as locusts were given to confectionery," interrupted Isabella, with a sniff of scorn.

"The remark was Mrs. Penn's, not mine," replied Flo, with dignity. "Anyway, the meaning is plain. We are not to sup. We are to 'ave'—mimicking her schoolfellow—'bins and sandviches'—heard sound in the schoolroom when the company have gone down stairs."

This take-off was lost on Isabella, who was too much impressed with the news to be alive to Flo's impertinence.

A dead silence followed this unpleasant announcement, and at length broken by Miss Carr, who, sliding off the screen, in the excitement of the moment, exclaimed,—

"Well, I never! I won't stand it! I shall tell Mrs. P. so to her face. Why, our parents pay for our supper. My par pays 'andomely for everything, extras and all, breaking-up party included; and to be put off with a bun! I think I see myself! I just do! Why"—warning with her theme—"supper's arif the fun. Then there's the crackers, and mottos, and jokes, and everyone of course taken down by a gentleman arm-in-arm. I'll go to supper for one, and stay up to the last; that's a fact. I did not get my new pink dress just to dance with girls, and eat a bun, and go to bed. Rather not! Leave it to me, girls," looking round upon her satellites with an air of friendly encouragement. "I shall speak to Miss Selina. We shall all go to supper, or my par shall know the reason why! You just leave it all to Isabella Carr."

"Oh, you dear, good Lizzy!" cried two voices, simultaneously. "You know you can do anything you like with Miss Selina, and if you ask her it will be all right. But about the partners. I'm afraid they will be few and far between. Miss Selina and Miss Penn keep the best themselves or for their friends. Anything is considered good enough for the girls. Last time I was thankful to dance all night with a boy in a jacket. Anything is better than sitting out," she concluded, in a well-begone accent, "but it was awfully slow."

"There are sure to be the Wolfertons," said

Flo, "and they generally bring two or three men. There was a Mr. Glyn last year, who was awfully smitten with Maddie, Maddie"—raising her voice—"do you remember Mr. Glyn? Come over here, and let us see if you are blushing."

"Mr. Glyn—Fred Wolferton's friend?" said Isabella, with much animation. "He is a barrister, of course, without a brief or a penny to jingle on a milestone—poor as Job. My par don't approve of my knowing these pangers"—giggling—"you know I'm an heiress, and par says—"

"Oh, bother your par!" interrupted Flo, rudely. "Don't you be uneasy. Mr. Glyn won't look at you as long as Maddie's in the way, and, anyway, he may not come. Who else are to be invited? The Sangsters, the Rays, the Jones's."

"All common sort of people," put in the granddaughter of a baronet, to show her superiority. "Very good in their way, and will do very well for a girls' school breaking-up, but I should not dream of knowing them at home, or of bowing if I met them anywhere," throwing up her chin as she spoke, and looking triumphantly around.

No one combated this dire announcement. In fact, they all were a little in awe of Miss Blueblood and her ancestors, and were silent and deeply impressed (being young).

At length a word was whispered which set all their tongues wagging very quickly—that patent word "dress." What were they all going to wear?

One lacked new shoes, another gloves, another a sash. A coral necklace was lent in prospect, in return for good offices in the hairdressing line.

Amidst this gabble, and Isabella talking high and shrill above it all about the pink satin body of her new dress, Maddie joined the crowd, looking rather white and cold, and no wonder.

"Keep away your fingers, Maddie, if they are sticky," said Flo. "Paws off, Pompey, and, by the way, what are you going to adorn yourself in? Your white dress was taken by the Pennies as most unsuitable to you now."

"I've nothing but my old black cashmere," she returned, "and this!" holding out a threadbare sage sleeve.

"They must give you something," said Isabella, impressively, "for the sake of the look of the thing. For the credit of the establishment"—grandly—"they can't have you like an old rag woman."

Madeline coloured vividly.

"I'll give you a dress myself, if you'd take it."

This was a very safe offer. Well did Isabella know that it would be promptly but politely declined.

"Now, I call that a French compliment," Isabella Carr, remarked Florence, frankly, "and you know it, if Madeline has got to wear the old black so much the worse. But whatever she wears she will always look a lady," accompanying the remark with a satirical look at Miss Carr that gave it point and meaning, and that made that young person feel as if she would relish taking the big ink bottle off the chimney-piece and flinging it at Florence Brown's big, square-looking head.

"You need not trouble about my dress, Flo, nor need I," said Madeline, trying to find room on the top of the screen for her benumbed fingers. "Miss Selina told me this morning to get up my dance music. I am to play."

"I say, what a shame!" chorused half-a-dozen voices. "A horrid shame! Saving the usual piano player and a guinea! Oh, the skinflints!"

But human nature is human nature, and not a few fair creatures felt a conviction that Madeline Grant and her pretty face were best at the piano, turned towards the wall, and that it was only fair to give others a chance—meaning their sweet, unsophisticated selves. They had a very distinct vision of the benefit that would accrue to them from this

economical arrangement on the part of the Pennies.

"But what will Mr. Glyn do?" said the baronet's granddaughter, with the corners of her mouth drawn down.

Madeline's eyes flashed. She was on the eve of uttering something sharp, but the words were taken out of her mouth by Flo, who replied—

"He will dance with you, my dear, instead."

"You know we are not allowed to talk about gentlemen," put in a prim girl, with a large white collar.

"Boah!" exclaimed Isabella. "I'll talk of who I please, from the old gentleman upwards. I'll talk of Mr. Glyn, Mr. Wolferton, Mr. Lancy, Mr. Sammers, Mr. Ferraby, Mr. Armstrong—"

"Young ladies," said an awful voice, that made them all start and fall back from the fender like a herd of frightened sheep, "what vulgarity is this? How often have I told you that I highly disapprove of such conversation. It will come to this, I see"—looking severely round—"you will have no half-hour after tea if you can't be trusted. I am very much shocked and displeased, especially"—seizing on her scapegoat—"with you, Madeline Grant. You are old enough to know better, to have some influence; and to find you in the very middle of all this unladylike chatter discussing gentlemen is really too odious. A girl in your position should have a little decency and self-respect. I am extremely displeased. Now, go; it is quite time the little Allens were in bed. How is it you have to be reminded of your duties?" she concluded, venomously.

Madeline opened her lips to speak.

"No answer; you know the rule. Now, young ladies, light the gas and get out your work."

A great commotion; exit Madeline, trying vainly to keep back her tears, and with a burning sense of injustice swelling in her breast. Indeed, for once she forgot herself, and slammed the door—not violently, but still defiantly. It was a foolish impulse, foolishly indulged.

She was called back and imperatively desired to show no temper, but to walk out of the room quietly, and close the door after her in a ladylike and becoming manner.

So even this slight safety-valve for her feelings was denied her, and she left the room for a second time completely humiliated and cruelly crushed.

CHAPTER III.

The great day of the "breaking-up" dawned at last. What preparations there were! A cart-load of chairs for the company—hired—was the first arrival, then a consignment of glass and crockery, baskets of hot-house flowers from popular pupils' "friends"—finally, in a confectioner's van, the supper. Mrs. Penn, her cap strings and curls flying, was nearly mad with excitement and fuss. The Misses Penn were busy, important, and dangerous to accost. The girls from an early tea hour had retired upstairs to indulge in the next best amusement to dancing, viz., dressing. Oh! with what leisurely care were heads tied, white dresses donned, gloves drawn on! How often was the following sentence spoken, with crafty calculation and artless air—

"You are looking awfully nice, dear. How am I looking?"

Madeline had no trouble with her toilet, the old black, with a lace ruffle and cuffs, and one rose at her neck was all the embellishment she had at her disposal, but she was very busy and in much request, decorating and adorning her more fortunate school-fellows.

The bell rang. Down they all trooped—conscious, coquettish, conceited, important, and filed past Miss Selina, who held an "inspection" in the hall. Miss Selina, whose face was flushed with excitement to the tint

of her new ruby satin, flashed to a shade that set all her efforts with pearl-powder at defiance, and scorned the application of Rowland's Kalydor!

The young ladies passed muster very creditably with a few exceptions, such as "Minnie, your dress is too short," "Fanny, those flowers are frightful!" and they passed into the schoolroom, where, on a raised platform, were seats for the chorus, two pianos, a harmonium, and all the preparations for a concert—the one drawback to the young ladies' absolute felicity, that is, those young ladies who had to perform, and who now awaited the audience in a kind of cold shiver, with clammy hands and beating hearts.

Presently Herr Müller arrived in elaborate evening dress, frilled shirt, white gloves, and a considerable accession of dignity, and talked and scolded, and ordered and encouraged his miserable pupils. Nervous as they were about the audience they were trebly afraid of him, and dared not break down, with his eye upon them, his hand turning over the leaves, his low "counting" in their ears.

The big room filled, filled fast, with day-scholars, their friends, parents, outsiders, and the Misses Penn's own circle (chiefly clerical). There was a very good sprinkling of the sterner sex, for Mrs. Penn's establishment was reputed to board some beauties. Very nice, indeed, the young people looked from the body of the concert-room—so fresh and fair, and young, in their modest white dresses, with their downcast eyes (that saw everything all the same).

Among other facts they noted the presence of all the Wolfertons and Mr. Glyn (whose presence on the occasion Miss Selina attributed solely to her own attractions). She was fifteen years older than him, but what of that? He was old for his age—she was young for hers. She flattered herself that in a becoming dress, with her back well to the light, she did not look an hour more than seven-and-twenty.

By all accounts Mr. Glyn was a briefless barrister, but Selina's share of the family stock was by no means contemptible, and he would "get on" of course. The Wolfertons had said that he was of splendid family, but poor. Strange that he should come to their breaking-up this year, too—made quite a point of it, Amy Wolferton had said. As he pressed her hand she glanced at him from under her light eyelashes, as the delicious conviction thrilled through her bosom that he had not forgotten her—their charming walk from church, the dainty little picnic party at which he had sat beside her, where the second relay of plates had been scanty, and he had asked with regard to the remains of some cold chicken, in the most marked way, "Miss Selina, will you permit me to lay my bones beside yours?" What was that but a proposal, certainly in a somewhat novel form! It meant, undoubtedly, that he hoped that they would share the same grave—the family vault of the blue-blooded Glyns.

How agreeable he was—these barristers always were—how good looking!—very different to Mr. Murphy, the red-haired Irish curate, upon whom her sister had built all her matrimonial hopes—(N.B. and it had been building on a quicksand)—casting a scornful glance at the curate's well-oiled red head immediately to her left.

These complacent reflections were rapidly chasing each other through the good lady's brain, as she sat in an attitude of solicitous attention during the opening cantata, sung by all the bevy of beauty on the platform—a shrewd, keen, calculating woman with regard to everyday matters, school accounts, butchers' bills, extras, and with a lynx eye for the failings and shortcomings of her flock. Where vanity whispered, and where a possible or impossible husband loomed on her horizon—Miss Selina was a completely different character and an absolute fool; as giddy as credulous, as feather-headed as any one of the young ladies meekly facing her behind their sheets of music—nay, worse, for everyone has

heard the proverb that "There is food like an old one."

Far-seeing crafty girls were clever enough to discover her weak side and use their discovery to their own advantage. They plied her with compliments ludicrously inappropriate. They called her "their own beautiful Miss Selina!" hinted she had only "to come, to be seen, and to conquer," &c. And these young ladies were frequently invited to the parlour tea, were taken to concerts, were "let off" on various occasions—and laughed at Miss Selina in their sleeves and called her "a ridiculous old goose, as ugly as sin, and as vain as a peacock!"

It is necessary to reveal Miss Selina in her true colours, in order to explain how a woman in her position could for a moment imagine that a young man would fall in love with her elderly charms, in spite of the overwhelming advantages possessed by at least twenty young rivals—her own pupils.

She had long looked upon "the girls" en masse as her natural enemies, not as pretty creatures of from sixteen to eighteen years of age, with bright eyes, brilliant complexions, and angelic dispositions. She bracketed them in her own mind as disagreeable female children with loud voices, voracious appetites, and sly ways.

She was reluctantly aware that Madeline could no longer be considered "a child;" that some people considered her not bad looking! To her she always looked as if she was painted.

She stared hard at her now, where her black dress made a bed among the first tribles. What a colour! Was she rouged? She looked like a doll. Doll or no doll, Miss Selina made a mental note that she should not be among the happy band who were coming in to supper. She might be getting "ideas" into her head—foolish ideas—people might notice her as they had done last year, and turn her head.

The cantata was concluded. A fierce bravura, performed by a long-fingered young lady with desperate energy, succeeded it. Poor girl! she was trembling with terror as she sat down. What with the audience below her, and Herr Müller behind her, she occupied the proverbial agreeable position of being "between the Devil and the deep sea," and played with a courage that was downright reckless.

The bravura was followed by a duet, the duet by a solo on the harp, then one or two songs. With regard to the last of these, the young performer found her feelings quite too many for her, and after some gurgling in her throat, and sniffing in her handkerchief, she collapsed into floods of tears, was briskly hustled into the background and hidden behind the others, and at a moment's notice Madeline was commanded to take her place and fill the gap in the programme.

Poor Madeline! It had not been intended that she should perform. She had no friends among the audience, no complacent relations to clap, and look important and proud. When her last words died away in dead silence—a silence caused by surprise and emotion—a pause of full a minute, and then a perfect hurricane of applause broke out.

Ladies worked away unaccustomed tears, and clapped in a manner that was bad for their new six-button gloves; their hearts were moved for the moment; some chord had been touched by that fresh young voice, by those half-forgotten old words—a chord that vibrated and woke up old memories, of "the days when they were young"—the "so sad, so sweet the days that are no more."

The men clapped tumultuously, not only because the singer had a lovely voice, and sang from her very heart; but—oh, dear me!—because men will be men, and because the girl in black was uncommonly pretty.

"Auld Robin Grey" was vociferously encouraged; but the fair vocalist was adamant. She only courtseyed timidly, and courtseyed again. No one but herself had seen Miss Selina's emphatic shake of the head, as she met her

cold grey eyes, in that "little look across the crowd"—there was to be no encore.

After the concert the room was cleared for dancing, and Madeline took up her post at the best (the drawing-room) piano, and played first a set of lancers to set every one going, and to polish off the dowagers and duty dances, then a waltz, then another waltz.

It was very stupid of her. She was placed with her back to the company, and could neither see nor be seen, which was exactly what Miss Selina intended; but the pretty singer was not to be so easily concealed.

More than one partner vainly urged for an introduction (which was smilingly refused). More than one shy young man pleaded fatigue, and halted long in the neighbourhood of the piano, where he could obtain a good view of the pretty pianiste.

After the second waltz, played by Maddie's weary fingers, Mr. Glyn came over, and said, as she stood up, selecting the next piece on the programme,—

"Miss Grant, we have all to thank you for your capital playing," holding out his hand as he spoke; "and now I hope you will give me the pleasure of the next dance?"

She took his hand timidly, and shook her head.

"Ah! I beg your pardon!" he said, glancing quickly at her black dress. "Let me at least take you to the tea-room; you must want something after all your exertions?"

"No, thank you very much," she answered, once more sitting down before the piano. "I have had my tea."

"You don't mean to say you are going to play again?" he asked, in a tone of indignant astonishment.

"Yes, I am going to play all the evening," she answered, turning over the leaves and finding the place, with slightly heightened colour.

"But last year you danced all the evening. What does it mean?"

"It means, Mr. Glyn, that I was then one of the boarders; now I am only a pupil-teacher. Things are changed—it is my duty to play; and"—faltering slightly—"I like it!"

"I'm afraid I hardly believe you, Miss Grant," he replied; "but I suppose must. Will you permit me to stay and turn over the leaves?"

"No—no," very eagerly, "please do not. You must dance."

"*Je n'en vois pas la nécessité,*" he quoted, seating himself deliberately as he spoke.

"I'm afraid you have lost a relative," he continued, in a lower voice. "Your father?"

"I have, in one sense," she answered, now striking up another waltz. "My father has not been heard of for a whole year. When he last wrote he had lost nearly all his fortune in some mines in Mexico; he has never written since."

She paused expressively.

"And have you no friends in this country?"

"No, none that I have any claim on. I have been here at school since I was nine years old."

"And, good heavens! You don't mean to tell me that you have no resource but to stay on here as pupil-teacher?" he demanded, disbelievingly.

"No. You see, I have no home—no home in this country. I had one—long ago—in Jamaica, the only one I ever knew."

"Do you remember it?" he asked, rather abstractedly.

"Oh, yes. I remember the long white verandah, the bright blue sea, my black nurse, Aunt Nannie, the gay tropical climate. I can shut my eyes and see it all now, and all the black people working in the canes."

"Has your father never come home to see you all these years?"

"Never. I'm afraid—I'm afraid—"

She paused, unable to articulate, but still kept playing steadily on.

"I'm afraid," he said, in a low voice, bending forward, "that you are not happy here," contrasting rapidly in his own mind the bril-

liant figure she made last year as belle of the party, the cynosure of all eyes, to what she appeared now—the poor piano-playing drudge, and not so much as rewarded with a "thank you," and dressed in a gown that even he could see was both old-fashioned and shabby, and threadbare.

"Oh, Mr. Glyn!" said a springy staccato voice at his elbow. "You naughty man, why are you not dancing? Come away; I can't have you taking off Miss Grant's attention—you dreadful person. Come away, darling; we are going to have another set of Lancers, and you shall be my partner," and with this heavy bribe he was summarily detached from his post beside the piano and carried off by the triumphant Miss Selina, swearing to himself, inwardly.

Madeline played and played until she felt that her fingers had no feeling, and were just as stiff and mechanical as a machine's.

At last supper released her. She stood up, half expectant, as the others flocked past two-and-two, each happy girl provided with a partner, beaming and giggling and blushing, as the case might be.

As she stood, a bony, much-ringed hand was laid heavily upon her shoulder, and she saw Miss Selina, who had accosted Mr. Glyn.

"Madeline, my dear," she whispered, "I'm sorry there is no room for you. I'll send you out a sandwich—and—something."

Then she passed on, leaving poor Madeline alone in that big empty room, with a lump in her throat and tears of disappointment in her eyes.

She indignantly declined the subsequent sandwich brought up on a plate by the sympathetic cook, who vowed "it was a shame;" but met with no encouragement to speak her mind on the subject.

Madeline knew she dare not go to bed, she had still to play—"it was in the bond;" so she had not that small comfort. Nor might she venture yet to indulge herself in the relief of a thoroughly good cry.

"What a difference money makes?" she said to herself, bitterly. "Look at the contrast between this night and last year. Who would have believed, I least of all, that night twelve months I should be sitting here alone. However, I don't suppose," she said, aloud, with a catch in her voice, "that anyone misses me."

In this supposition she was wrong. Many people missed "the girl in black," who had sung the song of the concert, who had played unremittently all the evening, who had such a shabby dress and such a sweetly pretty face.

Not a few of Mrs. Penn's smiling guests, who were eating her good things and sipping her champagne, were registering a black mark against her all the same, and thinking that they would be sorry that any friend of theirs filled the post of her "pupil-teacher."

Mr. Glyn "dissembled," as they say in plays, and was very agreeable to his fair partner, Miss Selina (but inwardly he was raging).

With professional cleverness he drew her out and cross-examined her with regard to Miss Grant, and she, her tongue unloosened by two glasses of champagne, her vanity stimulated by his attentions (to her plate), was completely off her guard, and as easily turned inside out as any quaking witness at the Old Bailey.

She expounded on Mr. Grant's enormities, the sums laid out on his daughter, the fact, that, "but for them, she would be friendless and homeless, probably begging from door to door. The man was dead. The girl had no friends, and only for their charity," here she paused, impressively, expecting Mr. Glyn to fill up the blank with some neat and appropriate speech, but for once she was doomed to disappointment.

"Only for your charity she would be a governess, would she not?" he remarked, carelessly. "With such musical talents she is sure of a lucrative situation—a hundred a-year or so. But of course, under your roof

she has all that she can wish for—a happy home among her old companions? And anyone can see that Mrs. Penn is a mother to her!" he concluded, with immovable features.

Miss Penn started, and became of a finer shade of crimson. This idea about a governess at one hundred pounds a-year was something novel.

The girl was accomplished! Was Mr. Glyn speaking ironically when he alluded to a happy home? Impossible!

His face was as unmoved, his eyes as smiling, his manner as sociable and friendly as possible. It was a foolish idea, and she immediately dismissed it from her mind and plunged into a discussion on platonic friendships and a second liberal helping of most excellent truffle.

Mr. Glyn managed to have a few words with Mrs. Wolferton after supper. He stated his case concisely, pointed out Madeline, and commended her to that kind lady's notice. Mrs. Wolferton was the mother of Fred, Mr. Glyn's schoolfellow, college friend, and chum, and was very fond of Hugh, whom she had known from a very bold boy in jackets upwards.

She listened to the sorry history of the pretty Miss Grant, and her motherly heart was touched.

She begged to be introduced to her.

"Remembered her well," she declared, "last year. Hoped she would come and see her during the holidays, and, finally, being an old lady who believed in deeds as well as words, took off her gloves, removed a jingling bracelet, and seated herself at the piano for the remainder of the night, in spite of Mrs. Penn's horrified expostulations, saying to Madeline, 'now, my dear, go and dance. Hugh, Miss Grant has not danced one step to-night!'"

This hint was unnecessary. Already Hugh and Miss Grant were at the other end of the room, and already a very portentous frown had settled on Miss Selina's brow, but it availed nothing.

Madeline was young—only eighteen—very pretty, very fond of dancing—dance she would when she could.

Mr. Glyn was a capital partner. He introduced her to various others, who voted the girl in black quite the prettiest they had seen for months, and who were the more eager to make her acquaintance and to dance with her from seeing that their attentions were highly displeasing to the Penn family.

Madeline danced till the very end of the evening, although Miss Selina had whispered fiercely in her ear as she stood near her,—

"Fashing, forward minx!"

She knew she would have to pay for this enjoyment on the morrow dearly, and was resolved to drain the cup of pleasure to the very last drop.

She looked quite lovely, if a little defiant. The excitement of dancing had made her eyes brighter and her colour deeper. Mr. Glyn told himself that she was the prettiest, aye, and the nicest, girl he had ever met in the whole course of his life; but that he must not lose his head—a briefless barrister could not afford to admire a pretty, penniless pupil teacher.

CHAPTER IV.

THE holidays commenced, the young ladies went, school broken up, and Madeline had now the whole big, empty school-room and the much-disputed fire entirely to herself. She was monarch of all she surveyed, but she was nearly as lonely as Robinson Crusoe on his desert island. The Miss Penns were not covetous of her company. She was never bidden to the friendly luncheon parties, the merry little suppers that repeatedly took place. She on these occasions had a plate of cold meat or bread-and-butter in the privacy of the schoolroom. There was no necessity, the Miss Penns averred, to intro-

dance her to their friends. It would be a mistake to spoil her. She was consecrated enough.

But Mrs. Wolferton had no scruples. She called, she wrote, she persevered, she carried her point. She insisted on having Madeline "to spend the day with her." What a change from the schoolroom at Penchester House! That dainty drawing-room, with its cosy chairs, mirrors, pictures, heavy portières, and Persian rugs, and Mrs. Wolferton knitting and talking, and telling her to "make herself at home!" Then there was a dainty luncheon—a drive—a scotch dinner—the Wolfertons, Mr. Glyn, and one or two others—music—perhaps a round game—in the midst of which would come "Miss Grant's servant, if you please;" but Mr. Glyn and Fred Wolferton would escort Miss Grant all the same, leaving her on Mrs. Penn's doorstep, not coming in, nor making any move in that direction—as Miss Selina angrily remarked from behind the drawing-room blind. Miss Selina had become very "cold" in her manner to Madeline; in fact, she was more than cold, she was actually hostile, and glared at the unlucky pupil-teacher as if she were some kind of domestic reptile.

She had nourished in her bosom Mrs. Wolferton's praises. Mrs. Wolferton's notice of Madeline did not please her at all, but, happy thought, Mrs. Wolferton was going away—going to the south of France to escape the east winds, and when she came back she would have forgotten her fancy. Miss Selina judged other people by her own standard.

Tickets for the theatre "for Mrs. and the Misses Penn and Miss Grant, with Mr. Fred Wolferton's compliments" (he had not left home, and Mr. Glyn was still his guest).

To go or not to go? that was the question debated with great spirit in Mrs. Penn's own bedroom. They would accept with pleasure; but Madeline Grant—must they take her too? There was no other alternative, alas! If she had only had a slight cold; but she was never better in her life. They had no excuse beyond their own disinclination. Go she must.

Very grudgingly they announced the news to her as she sat poring over her schoolroom fire, dividing her attention between a child's story book and Mr. Glyn—needless to tell you who had the largest share.

She could not help thinking a great deal of Mr. Glyn. It was wrong, it was foolish. Probably he never gave her a thought. Her cheeks became crimson at the idea, but an inward voice whispered another story. If he did not think of her why did he always monopolise her at Mrs. Wolferton's, sit beside her at cards, usurp Fred's place at the piano? Why had he begged a flower to keep? Why had he hinted that only for his poverty he would marry, or, at least, ask some girl to marry him who had no home. Who could that girl be but herself? Dare she whisper even to her inmost heart that she believed he meant her—Madeline Grant?

If he had not thought of her why did he tell her so much about himself, his old home, his dead father and mother, his rich and high and mighty relations, who looked upon empty pockets as a crime, but who patronised him, asked him to dinner now and then, and had hinted that if he were to put himself into the tallow, or cotton, or soap market, where heiresses were plentiful and his were scarce, he might, on the strength of his connections and his aristocratic appearance, land one of these young women and, perhaps, fifty thousand pounds?

But these suggestions he had not taken in "good part," between ourselves, and equally between ourselves, he asked himself what his grand relations would say if they knew that he was head over ears in love with a pretty little pupil-teacher—a perfect lady, certainly, and not unworthy to bear the name of Glyn, but absolutely without splendour.

The poor child liked him, too; he was sure of it, but honour set her seal upon his lips. He could not offer her a decent home—could not be sure that what barely sufficed for one

was a comfortable maintenance for two. Best leave her if he could, in maiden meditation fancy free—leave her for some luckier fellow, leave his heart in her unconscious keeping.

This visit to the theatre was to be the very last meeting he would allow himself, and then for his dismal old top chambers in the Temple and work. Plenty of work is an excellent and healing medicine for any affection of the heart, so he had read, so he had been told, and now he would test its efficacy.

The great evening came, and with hot and trembling fingers Madeline made her modest toilet, donned her hat and jacket, and awaited the rest of the party in the hall in a state of anxious suspense. She had never been in a theatre in her life. Her heart was beating fast with happy anticipation—what a night to look back upon! Mr. Irving as *Hamlet*, what she had often longed to see, and now she was going to see it with Mr. Glyn.

It was too much pleasure all squeezed into one evening; if it could only be spread out over three or four days instead of all to be over in two or three hours!

"Madeline," said a sharp voice, that startled her from her delicious expectations, "come into the drawing-room for a moment. I wish to speak to you," leading the way into that cold apartment, lit at present by one gas burner, and innocent of such extravagance as a fire. "I wish to speak to you," proceeded Miss Selina, firmly, "about the ridiculous way you are going on with Mr. Glyn. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Why, what have I done, Miss Selina? What do you mean?" she asked, breathless with horror.

"What have you not done? Flirted with him, run after him to Mrs. Wolferton's, made yourself the common talk of the whole place. Don't imagine for a moment that he thinks of you as anything but a silly little chit of a schoolgirl, who is head over ears in love with him, and whom it amuses him to draw out and laugh at with Mr. Fred Wolferton!"

"Miss Selina!" cried Madeline, stung to the quick, and turning very pale, and grasping the back of a chair as she spoke, "how dare you say such things? You know they are not true. I went to Mrs. Wolferton's because she was kind—because she asked me. I never ran after Mr. Glyn—never!"

"And pray what are you doing to-night?" with grim ironical interrogation.

"If you think that I am running after him I can easily reassure you. I can stay at home. I (oh! what a wretch was this!) but her pride was roused) will stay at home," taking off her hat as she spoke. "The matter is easily settled."

Not so easily as she imagined, for at this moment loud, cheery, masculine voices in the hall broke in upon them. The door was widely opened; enter Fred Wolferton, Mr. Murphy the curate (hush! you must not tell the bishop), an elderly escort for Mrs. Penn, and Mr. Glyn. And although Madeline declared, with much embarrassment, that she was "not going," most positively—as she could give no reason for her sudden announcement and was dressed for the theatre—public opinion carried the day.

She replaced her hat in answer to an impatient signal from Miss Selina and went; but the gilt had been removed from her gingerbread, and all the way in the train (they were fifteen miles from River Bank) she was unusually pale and silent, and pointedly avoided Mr. Glyn, to Miss Selina's great content. But Mr. Glyn would not be avoided. He ignored Miss Selina's hints, the vacant place she patted invitingly beside her, as much as to say, "Come and sit here and be happy," and went and placed himself at the other side of Madeline, whose eyes were straying over the theatre in blank surprise.

It was not a bit like what she thought it would be.

She noted the gorgeous gilded ceiling, the florid ornaments, the draped stage, many gay

parties rapidly filling the boxes, and, once the overture commenced, she began to realize that she was enjoying herself extremely, and would not allow Miss Selina's dreadful accusation to spoil her whole evening.

Miss Selina felt that she had been publicly slighted.

What is that line about "a woman scorned?" She felt capable of anything. Her rage against Mr. Glyn was as consuming and as hot as her jealousy of Madeline.

They should suffer for their insolence, as she called it, meaning the simple fact of their sitting together, talking with much animation, and looking very happy.

Yes, she would find a way to pay them out. And as she sat silent, her eyes upon the drop-scene, she was revolving portentous schemes in her mind that would not tend to their benefit, to say the least of it.

The orchestra was playing a wild Polish dance, its burthen full of sadness, despair, and weird fantastic chords at one period, at another gaily frolicsome and full of overtures of mad mirth—an air that exercised a strange influence upon them, specially on one—Madeline—in her present state of highly strung nerves and repressed mental excitement.

She drank in that weird, wild air with eager ears, and never forgot it as long as she lived. It always reminded her of this night—this momentous night, the crisis of her existence. She glanced at the stage, at the big red, mysterious curtain, the bowed figures in the orchestra, the floridly ornamented theatre, the brightly-filled—nay, crowded boxes, and asked herself, "Was it all real?"

But the moment for the drama had arrived; the curtain rose slowly on *Hamlet*, or rather on the gravedigger, and from that instant until it finally descended, three hours later, every glance, every thought of hers was, as it were, chained to the stage.

At last it was over. Mr. Irving and Miss Terry had been called three times before the curtain amidst cheering and clapping that was vociferous as it was well deserved. And now people began to move, to look about for cloaks, tippets, opera-glasses, and to hurry away as if their life depended on it.

The crowd had been great; it was snowing hard outside, and now the crush was simply awful.

"I'll take care of you, Miss Grant," said Mr. Glyn eagerly, as they found a footing in the passage among hundreds of the audience.

"Very well, mind you do," observed Miss Selina, impressively; "we are sure to get separated. Look here, Madeline," suddenly lowering her voice, "meet us at the bottom of the station steps. Mr. Glyn, will look after you; mind you are not late—it's the last train." And with this injunction she was borne away in the crowd, her red opera cloak soon hidden from their gaze.

"Let us wait till the rush is over, and take it quietly, there's plenty of time," observed Mr. Glyn, struggling to look at his watch. "We will get a hansom and be at the station in no time, before them, ten to one, for they are a large party."

Towards he marvelled at Miss Selina's arrangement; he was not aware that she had her reasons, and he was too well satisfied to question the matter.

After a little he made his way down to the portico, secured a hansom, and drove with his charge to the place of rendezvous, the foot of the station steps—a covered place, luckily, for the snow was falling thick and fast.

They waited five minutes, no one came, no one to meet them—ten minutes, still no one; the hurrying crowd that passed up too had ceased.

"I hope they have not come to grief," said Mr. Glyn, and suddenly looking at his watch. "I'll tell you what, we can't wait any longer or we will miss our train; we must run for it as it is," running quickly up the steps. Too late—too late. The red light of the last train

to Ferrystone was just vanishing into the big tunnel.

What was to be done? He stood for a moment irresolute. It was the last train, and it was gone.

A cab was the first idea. Leaving Madeline, who was benumbed with waiting and a good deal frightened, he hurried to the cab rank. It was empty. He waylaid a passing cabbie, and told him the state of the case. "Fifteen miles in deep snow! couldn't be done, sir—not for no price." The same story was repeated elsewhere; there was nothing for it but to go back to Madeline, who was shivering over the dying fire in the ladies' waiting room.

"Well?" she asked, raising her face expectantly.

"No cab to be had," with assumed sang froid.

"No cab to be had!" she echoed, her hazel eyes darkening and dilating with horror. "Oh! Mr. Glyn, can we walk?"—mad project.

"No; I fancy the best thing to do will be to stay here all night—I mean at the King's Arms—and go on by the first train in the morning. I will go to the landlady and make her promise to look after you, and I will find a lodging elsewhere. It will be all right," reassuringly. "Are you certain that Miss Selina said the foot of the steps?" he added, as if struck by an after-thought.

"Yes, quite certain," resolutely.

"Here," he called to a porter, "did you see a party looking for any people by the last train—three ladies, three gentlemen?"

"Yes, sir; about old lady—two elderly ladies." "Oh, ye gods, if the Miss Penns heard him!" "Three gents. They did seem looking; but one of the ladies said you was sure to come, and bundled 'em all into a carriage."

"Well, we can do no good waiting here," he said at length. "Come along; there's nothing to be frightened at, Miss Grant (Miss Grant was crying quietly, and very much alarmed, indeed). You will be back in time for breakfast. It was all an accident, a misunderstanding, and if any one is to blame or to be blamed let it be me."

"Oh, I know they will be very, very angry," said Madeline, in a tone of deep dejection. "I don't know what they will say."

"Not when I explain everything to their entire satisfaction? I will go security that you will not get into any trouble."

And, really, half-an-hour later, as Madeline sat with her feet on the fender of a comfortable bedroom in the King's Arms, a magnificent apartment to her benighted eyes, with a roaring fire before her, a glass of hot negus in her hand, and a sandwich beside her on the table, she began to cheer up, and take a higher view of the situation.

What harm was it, after all, missing a train? Nothing so very dreadful. She could only get a scolding at the worst.

But Mr. Glyn, as he fought his way to another hotel on foot, with the collar of his coat well turned up, and his head bent against the beating sleet and snow, looked graver than he had done when he was talking so cheerfully to Madeline.

It was a very awkward business, and he had an unpleasant conviction that Miss Selina had been at the bottom of it.

However, time would tell. Perhaps the worst would be "a bad quarter of an hour" with old Mrs. Penn.

(To be continued.)

An careful of the books you read as of the company you keep; for your habits and character will be as much influenced by the former as by the latter.

Great talents for conversation should be attended with great politeness. He who eclipses others owes them great civilities; and whatever a mistaken vanity may tell us, it is better to please in conversation than shine in it.

ONCE FOR ALL.

CHAPTER V.

FIFTEEN years passed away.

All Rome was ringing with the praise of the great sculptor, Cecil Maybrooke. Not Rome only—the whole world knew his name, and bowed in homage to his genius.

His groups and figures expressed so much more than the new beauty of form and feature. Poetry was caught and imprisoned in the marble. Human love was idealized as though it had been purified by suffering. There was always something sad in his work—something that would bring the tears very near to the eyes of the beholders. His last work on Ariadne had crowned his fame.

There was such pathos in the deserted maiden's pose, in the droop of the head, and in the fingers that were unconsciously crushing all the fragrance from the blossoms she held in her clasp.

It was the one theme which occupied the art world, and all ranks of society.

His uncle's words, though at the time they had fallen upon dulled ears, had borne fruit.

Fate had been harsh to him, but genius and endurance had triumphed; he had conquered adversity, and risen to the highest pinnacle of fame.

Princes, poets, statesmen and philosophers were proud to claim friendship with the man whose story, when it broke upon the astonished ears of society fifteen years before, had caused more than a nine days' wonder.

When he was in England the highest in the land welcomed him to their houses. Fair peeresses showed invitations upon him, and counted their réceptions a failure if he were not there.

Many a bright eye grew brighter, many a gentle heart beat more quickly, when he was near, when his thoughtful glances fell upon the owners, or his liquid tones addressed them in the language of civility.

He was courteous and deferential in his manner to all women, high or low, but nothing more.

No woman had ever heard words of love from him since the day that Ocellah Caversham had rejected his love, and flung it back upon himself. That passion had burnt itself out, but no other human love had taken its place. No woman's voice had power to charm his ears. No woman's form or face, however lovely, could make his heart beat one throb the faster. The Southern Serranus which had made his love such exquisite bliss and such exquisite pain had gone for ever. He was cold, passionless, calm. He lived in and for his art alone, and she had proved no fickle mistress. If he were faithful to her, she in return had showered benefits upon him. After the shattering of his hopes he had gone to Italy.

Despite the entreaties of his uncle he would not stay at Maybrooke Hall; he felt he could not live in the same country which held his false love.

He accepted the barest assistance from his uncle's hands, just enough to keep body and soul together, though the latter would gladly have shared Henry Maybrooke's vast wealth with the son who, but for the accident of his birth, would have inherited all.

But Cecil was firm in his determination; he would accept the sum he stated, and no more. He threw himself heart and soul into his work, and the labour brought its own reward.

Little by little the gnawing pain at his heart grew duller, till at last there was nothing left but the healed cicatrix. He could bear to think of Ocellah as the wife of another without a pang; but all the same, no other woman had taken the place she had left vacant in his heart. He had expended all the wealth of his affection upon her, and had left none for any one else to share. He often stayed at Maybrooke Hall when he visited England.

He was always a welcome visitor there. His

uncle and uncle were very pleased to have him with them, and showed it plainly, but it was little Nenta who testified the greatest delight at his presence.

While still a child, she would run to him, putting up her rosebud mouth to be kissed, and would make him the confidante of all her childish troubles.

She would make him her obedient slave, and order him about with a childish imperiousness that often made the grave, stern, look on his brow relax into a smile.

But latterly there had been a change in her manner. Though not less cordial she had been less warm and impulsive. There were no more confidences between them; she seemed shy and constrained in his presence.

Cecil noticed it, but did not trouble about it. It was only a child's caprices, he said to himself. He always thought of her as a child. He forgot that fifteen years had changed the child to a woman, with all a woman's capacity for love and suffering. Though outwardly he did not show his forty years yet, they had left their mark upon him; he felt old, whereas Nenta, despite of her two-and-twenty years, was very youthful, both in appearance and feeling.

She spent the greater portion of her life at Maybrooke Hall. She had been brought up rather in seclusion under the eyes of her parents. They did not want her to be spoiled by society, they did not want their darling to become a professional beauty, so they had not often taken her to London, and the few times she had been she did not care for it.

The false glare and glitter shocked her. She saw through the insincerity of the compliments paid to her because she was Henry Maybrooke's heiress by the painted and jewelled old women who would have made much of her for the sake of her father's wealth.

She shrunk from the boldly expressed admiration of the men who would gladly have secured so rich a prize.

They were so different from Cecil; he never flattered or paid insincere compliments; he only spoke the truth.

Unconsciously she had set up an ideal, and that ideal was Cecil.

Since the day she had found him lying in the grass, and he had carried her home with her curly head lying upon his breast, a tiny child of seven, she had cherished a tender recollection of him, which had grown with her growth, till at last he had a shrine in her heart which excluded the image of any other man.

She was not aware that she loved him, she only knew that life seemed fairer when he was present, and that it took a dull grey tone in his absence.

Every tree and stone about her home was dear to her. She loved the trees and forests, the swelling uplands, the smiling valleys, the crystal waters. The red deer were her friends, and would come at her call; even the wild birds would fly down to be fed from her hands. She loved them all; they added to the beauty and tranquillity of her life, but she loved them tenfold when Cecil was there amongst them.

The sun seemed to shine the brighter, the birds to sing more joyfully, the flowers to bloom with more brilliant radiance, the water to ripple along more musically when he was by her side, as she strolled along beneath the leafy aisles formed by the arching branches of the forest trees.

Whenever she knew that he had returned to England from his Italian home, she waited anxiously for his coming to Maybrooke Hall, though when he had come she would be silent and shy in his presence. Still to know that he was there was enough. She was restless and uneasy when he was in London; she had some vague fear that one of the forward, fast young ladies, who ranged and talked slang, might catch him in her coils, and she could not bear the thought of his belonging to another.

She need not have feared; Cecil was proof against women's wiles. He had fallen once

under the spell of the mighty passion, but it seemed as though he never would again.

If she could have seen him in the Countess of Highacres' splendid salons, surrounded by all that was loveliest in the beau-monde, and the careless way in which he received their delicately veiled and graceful flatteries, she would have known how little he cared for their admiration, and what a small amount of thought he bestowed upon the fair flatterers.

Even Nesta's foolish, loving, jealous little heart would have been satisfied, for she would have seen that if he did not love her neither did he care in the slightest for any of the lovely women with whom he mingled in the whirl of London society.

The Countess of Highacres was a leader in the world of fashion. For ten years she had worn the golden chains which she had voluntarily assumed, and no one from her exterior would have guessed how they galled and chafed her.

They had been ten years of unmitigated misery to her. She loathed her elderly husband with a loathing that amounted to positive hatred; the touch of his hand sent a shudder of repulsion through her; she sickened with horror at the hateful caresses which she was obliged to endure, for had she not sold herself to him?

There were times when she could have cursed him, with his leering ways and would-be juvenility. But who could tell this? None. Society judges from the surface, and society thought she was a model wife.

She appeared everywhere with him, she dressed exquisitely, she wore the Highacres diamonds with a royal grace, she received his guests with the most perfect aplomb, and was cited everywhere as a paragon of wifely perfection.

None could have told how bitterly she regretted the step she had taken, how madly she longed to be able to undo the past; none, save herself and the man who had bought her.

He had heard the name she had muttered in her dreams, and taunted and glibed her with the knowledge, and with the fact that she had sold herself for gold when her heart was another's.

But though he took very good care in private to draw tighter the chains that galled her, before people he was studiously polite and affectionate. He knew that she hated the display of his affection worse than his gibes, and acted accordingly. But after ten years release had come to her.

A fit of the gout carried off the Right Honourable the Earl of Highacres, and at thirty-four his beautiful wife was left a widow.

Never did woman welcome her freedom from bondage, that was worse than slavery, more cordially than Ozellah welcomed hers.

All at once she seemed to regain some portion of her lost youth. Outwardly observant of all the forms of woe, her heart was yet singing a psalm of thankfulness and delight.

She was once more free. She cared not that the Earl, carrying his jealousy beyond the grave, had made a will leaving everything away from her should she marry again.

She had learned that true love far outweighed gold and all other earthly dross. She would have given up all for which she had bartered her youth without one sigh, if by so doing she could have won Cecil back to her side.

She would have gone to him gladly had he been penniless and nameless as when he had poured out his heart in passionate, futile prayers to her, instead of being, as he now was, high up on the ladder of fame.

But five years had gone by since her husband's death, and she had not forfeited his wealth by marrying again.

Cecil's prayer had been granted. He had prayed that he might never look upon her face again until he could see it without its causing his heart to beat the faster, and her

presence now caused him no more emotion than any other woman of his acquaintance.

As far as love was concerned his heart seemed dead within him. He was an occasional visitor at her mansion in Belgravia, but he visited her as he visited many other titled ladies.

She could detect no sign in his manner to her of the tenderness he had once felt for her, but hope did not leave her; she saw that no other woman had usurped the empire she once held over his heart.

He would return to her, she felt sure; the love that he had given to her could not die away. She had been mad when she had thrown away such a priceless gift, but it was not too late to woo him back.

She was a very beautiful woman still. Her thirty-nine years sat lightly upon her. Her red gold hair shone with as burnished a lustre as ever; and if her complexion owed more to art than of yore, it was so artistically done that it was hard to detect where nature ended and art stepped in. Her figure was beautifully moulded, and she threw in the shade many a younger woman.

Her taste in dress was unimpeachable. Her house was filled with the rarest works of art, among which several of Cecil's groups were prominent. Her wealth enabled her to gratify her artistic tastes, though it could not fill the aching void in her heart.

She longed for Cecil as the hart longs for water, and he seldom came near her. She looked for his presence as eagerly as a young girl watches for her lover's coming, and she felt the same chill disappointment when day after day passed without bringing him.

She treasured the letters that he had written her in the days of long ago. They were faded now, those letters in which his hand had traced words burning of deathless love, but she treasured them as people treasure the relics of the beloved dead.

She looked on them till her head drooped, and her eyes grew dim with a bitter pain, and her lips quivered as she gazed. She had forsaken him, but she knew now that she had erred. She would have given her life to have felt his kiss once more upon her lips. She would have given more than her life could she have done so to win back the love that she had lost.

Meanwhile Cecil had been passing the summer days at Maybrooke Hall in calm content.

To the man who was sated with the world's applause, the tranquil rest of its lovely woods came with a double charm after the turmoil of cities.

He had the poet's love of nature, and in the solitudes of the forest he could dream of some new conception in his art. He lived only for it. He had given himself up wholly to it, but nevertheless the relaxation from work which he always indulged in when he came to Maybrooke Hall was delightful to him. He would wander at will through the forest glades, listening to the songs of the birds and the busy hum of insect life which always had power to charm his ear. He would watch the red deer as they browsed, with some magnificent stag with branching antlers keeping sentinel; or the stately flight of the herons across the marshes.

He loved these solitudes far better than the busy haunts of lives; they brought back to him his youth when life had seemed so fair, and no shadow of the fate which was to fall upon him darkened it.

One day he penetrated far into the depths of the forest. He came upon a lovely spot. In the centre of a glade was a small brown tarn frequented by the teal and mallards, who winged their flight from the marshes. The edges were covered with feathery ferns, which took a brighter hue from the moisture in which they lived. Flocks of birds came to drink and bathe themselves in its cool waters undisturbed by any intruders on their solitude.

He was walking dreamily along, drinking in

the beauty of the spot, when he suddenly paused, startled; resting near the edge of the pool, with her head leaning back against a mossy tree trunk, lay a girl asleep.

Her hat was off, and lying beside her. A book which she had been reading had fallen out of her hand and lay on the soft turf among a profusion of wild flowers and ferns that she had evidently been gathering.

Crouched close beside her with his head upon her knee was a magnificent St. Bernard dog, who had a wreath of wild flowers encircling his massive neck in place of a collar.

He was perfectly still and motionless, all except his eyes, which were alert and watchful, and seemed to say that he would guard his fair mistress while life remained in him.

At the first sounds of Cecil's footsteps the dog had uttered a low growl, but without changing his position in the slightest, or waking the sleeper. However, when he recognized the intruder the growl ceased, and a slow and majestic wag of his tail testified his welcome to the new comer.

The sleeping girl was Nesta Maybrooke.

A fair picture she made.

The sun filtering through the leaves of the trees overhead cast some stray beams across her face and head, lending a softer hue to her fair cheek and a brighter tint to the locks of gold, which were as curly and rebellious now as in the days of her childhood. A few tendrils of ivy and some delicate pale blossoms were twined among the threads of gold. The rosebud lips were parted in a happy smile, just showing the pearly teeth.

It was evident that her dreams were pleasant ones.

Cecil held his breath in admiration.

Her beauty came to him like a revelation. He had always thought of her as a pretty child, now he recognized that she was a woman, and a very lovely one too.

Cecil felt something of the old pain, the old unrest, wake in him as he gazed at her.

The smile of woman's eyes had no beckoning light for him, the whisper of woman's allurement no sorcery for his ear, yet there was enough of the poet in him to make him vaguely feel some memories of his youth arise, when a woman had been the whole world to him, and to make him bend tenderly over that bright head with its coronal of flowers.

Love had long been dead in him; it had gone with his youth—never, he believed like that youth to revive—yet the sight of this sleeping maiden had stirred the chord in his heart which he had thought was broken for ever.

He did not know that the hours seemed so long to her when he was away from her presence, that the mere distant sound of his voice filled her heart with joy so intense that it was almost pain, that the forest-world about her wore a light it had never had before, that when he was with her the whole earth seemed changed and transfigured—he did not know, but he was soon to learn.

As he bent over her, gazing into her flushed face, her lips opened, and a soft murmur issued from them, "Cecil, my love."

He started back, then smiled at his own folly. Of course it could not be—she was only dreaming.

The movement he made awakened her. She opened her eyes, the happy smile still upon her lips. "Cecil, my own!" she murmured, half dreaming yet.

Then as she recognized the hero of her dreams bending over her she sprang to her feet in maidenly confusion, scattering her wild flowers on the surface of the water, blushing a more rosy-red than the deep-hued blossoms at her feet, and looking in her wild, shy grace like a startled fawn.

"Nesta, little one, were you dreaming of me?" Cecil's voice was very gentle, very tender, as he addressed her in the endearing terms he had used in her childhood.

She looked up at him with the startled look still in her blue eyes. "Yes, no,—that is, I mean—" she stammered.

He saw that in the blue orbs that told him she loved him, and the sudden knowledge touched and charmed him.

It was years since a woman's love had any power over him, but he felt vaguely that this girl before him had the power to kindle the embers in his heart, which were only smouldering, though he had thought them extinguished for ever.

"Nesta," he said, seeing her confusion and wishing to put her at her ease. "How is it I find you here? It is too far for you to come alone. To be sure, there are not many people who penetrate so far into these woods, but still you might meet tramps, and you would be defenceless against them."

"Oh! no; not with Sir Galahad, he would not let anyone touch me," she answered, fondling the noble head of her favourite.

"Oh! I forgot, you have a staunch protector there, still it is very far from your home. Suppose a sudden storm should come on, all Sir Galahad's chivalry could not protect you from a soaking, or avert the dart of the lightning," he said, half jesting, half earnestly.

"I do not wish to think of anything so dreadful," she said, lightly. My father and mother let me roam where I will with Sir Galahad; they know I am safe with him. I discovered the tarn one day in our rambles, and it has been a favourite spot with me since, only I do not come to it very often, because it is so far."

"I am glad to hear that," he said, "because I do not think it safe for you even with Sir Galahad."

"I have never met anyone," she said.

"But I have," he answered significantly.

"This day I met two very rough-looking men, who, I think were poachers, and as they carried guns, I am afraid Sir Galahad's chance would have been small against them had they come upon you when you were sleeping."

"Ceil," she said, her cheeks paling. "You have taken the romance from my tarn. I shall be afraid to come here again."

"I did not mean to frighten you, Nesta," he returned, "but you shall not give up your visits here while I am staying at Maybrooke Hall, for I will come with you whenever you wish it; but I am sure you must be tired. Lean on me while we return."

His solicitude was very sweet to her. She was tired, though she would not own it. She had dropped asleep from fatigue beside the tarn, but to walk thus by his side she would have gone on unconscious of fatigue, till her limbs refused to support her any more.

That blissful walk was followed by many others.

Since the knowledge of her love had broken upon him, Cecil found a charm in her society which he had once thought no woman would ever bestow upon him again.

He had gone to her father at once, and explained the matter to him, for he would not attempt to speak to her of love without his sanction.

For the first time for several years he remembered that he had no legal right to the name he bore, and he did not know whether her father would bestow her upon a nameless man.

Great, then, was his joy when his uncle, taking his hand in a hearty clasp, cried, "Welcome her by all means, Cecil; there is not another man living to whom I would more willingly give her."

"Thank you, sir," said Cecil, brokenly. "I will guard with my life the treasure you have given me. I never thought that she loved me. I am nearly twice her age, and she is so young and fair."

"You must have been blind, Cecil," said his uncle, quietly; "her mother and I have seen it for a long time, but we feared that you would never reciprocate her love. I am thankful, indeed, that my darling's life will not be blighted."

"Truly, I must have been blind," muttered Cecil.

(To be continued.)

YOU AND I.

THE years wheel on in a ceaseless whirl,
And many have fled since I
Your letter read—your first sweet one—
And more since we said "good-bye."
I live in a cottage, small and brown,
With roses that climb o'er the wall,
With flowers that bloom at every pane,
And the sunshine dappling the hall.

And sometimes here on a summer day,
You pass in your carriage grand,
And I catch a gleam of your plain gold ring
On your white familiar hand,
As you lift your hat in your haughty way—
I remember it better than all—
And your proud eyes look, with a cold contempt,

At my home so pretty and small.
But oh! sweetheart, though I used to shrink
From the angry glance of your eye,
The days when I cared for station and wealth
Have for ever passed me by!

And I did not shrink when I met your glance,
Though scornful and cold: for yet
I knew that, deep in your heart of hearts,
There was only a saddest regret.
And I think you sighed as I kissed my child—
My baby—with eyes of blue;
Sweet emblem of faith and changeless love
To my husband, tender and true;
For you know that never, in all your life,
Will you hold a child to your breast;
And a loving woman, and feel that you
Are away from the world—at rest.

And so I smile as you pass me by,
And oftentimes I sigh;
The smile I give to the days that are,
The sigh for those gone by.

CLIFFE COURT.

CHAPTER III.

UNDER ordinary conditions Arline Lester would have found life at the Chase a very pleasant and luxurious thing compared with the frugal economies she had always been forced to practice in her northern home; but unfortunately she was in a position to look under the surface, and her anxiety on Alicia's behalf grew deeper as she saw how little Sir Ascot Carlyon thought of or cared for the woman who bore his name.

They rarely met more than once a day at dinner, and not always then, for the Baronet had in a measure relapsed into his bachelor habits, and frequently spent the evening out, or entertained male friends at parties where a lady's presence would only have proved a restraint.

The one thing she had to care for, and which she clung to with a love that almost amounted to idolatry, was her baby. She would sit by his cradle watching him for hours together, and at night, instead of letting his nurse take him, she always insisted on having him with her. It seemed as if she feared to let him out of her sight for a moment longer than was absolutely necessary.

"What she would do if anything were to happen to him! Heaven only knows!" Arline said to herself. "He has filled the place in her heart that should be her husband's, and that was Major Stuart"; but if he were taken from her, she would die, or go mad, or—something worse!"

And she was not far wrong in her surmise. After that first night, when the barriers of her reserve had broken down under the influence of Arline's presence and sympathy she had carefully abstained from uttering a word of her private sorrows, and had even done her best to evince that, if not happy, she was at least content. In good truth, she had always tried her hardest to be a thoughtful and submissive wife, and leave no ground of

complaint for her husband, and so far she had succeeded—the time was swiftly approaching when she would find submission an impossibility.

She was sitting alone one morning at her desk when Sir Ascot joined her, and looked over her shoulder.

"Whom are you writing to?" he demanded, throwing himself into an armchair opposite.

"To Cliffe Court. We are invited to dine there next week."

"And you are accepting?"

"No! I intended saying we had a previous engagement. You told me to do so when I asked you about it yesterday morning."

"I remember, but I have altered my mind since then. I thought the Cliffes were alone, and, as you know, I'm not particularly fond of Master Hubert; but this morning I met him on horseback with the Countess de Roubaix, and—"

"You think her presence will make a difference?" Lady Carlyon added, smiling serenely as he paused.

"It is well calculated to, I should imagine, for she is very handsome, and from the few words I heard her say I fancy she is witty and entertaining. At all events, we will accept the invitation."

"I suppose," Alicia said, hesitating, "you would not care to go without me?"

"Why don't you want to come?"

"Because of Arline. You see, she is not invited, and she might think it unkind of me to leave her alone."

"Rubbish! She can't expect you to refuse your neighbour's hospitalities on her account? If she does the sooner she is undeceived the better. By-the-bye, Alicia, I have come to you on rather an unpleasant matter," he drew his chair up nearer, and looked round to see that the door was fastened. "I want you to write to Mr. Bayliss, and tell him to prepare a mortgage deed on part of these estates. The fact is, I have to raise some money, and as he is your trustee as well as your lawyer he will require an authority from you to enable him to go on with the matter."

Alicia, watching him very intently, fancied that under the apparent carelessness of his manner there was a certain restless anxiety; and little used to business as she was, it at once struck her this request of his must be of some importance.

"You want to raise money?" she echoed, in surprise. "Why, you got fifty thousand pounds last year through the sale of that farm that Custance bought, did you not?"

"What has that to do with it?" he retorted, irritably. "I have not sought an interview with you for the purpose of discussing what I did in the past, but to make arrangements for the future."

"I think you are very extravagant, Ascot; you cannot possibly have spent all that money in so short a time without gambling in some way or other, and that you promised you would abandon when I consented to the sale of the Glebe property. My income is, or was, a large one, and ought to be sufficient for our necessities without attacking the principal."

"You need not remind me of your wealth, and my own comparative poverty," he said, bitterly. "Our marriage was a fair exchange—I gave you a title in return for your riches."

Alicia was silent, keenly stung by the taunt, although it carried no truth with it.

"The mistake was that I ever consented to that precious marriage settlement of yours," he continued, with gloomy anger. "What does a woman know of money matters, and why should she have anything to do with them? If I had my way the whole feminine sex should be debarred from all such things. However, this is hardly to the point. The fact is, I want money, and money I must have."

"Ascot," said his wife, laying an earnest hand on his shoulder, "have you broken your word to me, and gone on with racing and betting?"

His eyes fell under her clear scrutiny, and he shook off the gentle touch.

economical arrangement on the part of the Pennies.

"But what will Mr. Glyn do?" said the baronet's granddaughter, with the corners of her mouth drawn down.

Madeline's eyes flashed. She was on the eve of uttering something sharp, but the words were taken out of her mouth by Pio, who replied,—

"He will dance with you, my dear, instead."

"You know we are not allowed to talk about gentlemen," put in a prim girl, with a large white collar.

"Boosh!" exclaimed Isabella. "I'll talk of who I please, from the old gentleman upwards. I'll talk of Mr. Glyn, Mr. Wolferton, Mr. Lane, Mr. Sammers, Mr. Ferraby, Mr. Armstrong—"

"Young ladies," said an awful voice, that made them all start and fall back from the fender like a herd of frightened sheep, "what vulgarity is this? How often have I told you that I highly disapprove of such conversation. It will come to this, I see—looking severely round—you will have no half-hour after tea if you can't be trusted. I am very much shocked and displeased, especially"—seizing on her scapegoat—"with you, Madeline Grant. You are old enough to know better, to have some influence; and to find you in the very middle of all this unladylike chatter discussing gentlemen is really too odious. A girl in your position should have a little decency and self-respect. I am extremely displeased. Now, go; it is quite time the little Allens were in bed. How is it you have to be reminded of your duties?" she concluded, venomously.

Madeline opened her lips to speak.

"No answer; you know the rule. Now, young ladies, light the gas and get out your work."

A great commotion; exit Madeline, trying vainly to keep back her tears, and with a burning sense of injustice swelling in her breast. Indeed, for once she forgot herself, and slammed the door—not violently, but still defiantly. It was a foolish impulse, foolishly indulged.

She was called back and imperatively desired to show no temper, but to walk out of the room quietly, and close the door after her in a ladylike and becoming manner.

So even this slight safety-valve for her feelings was denied her, and she left the room for a second time completely humiliated and cruelly crushed.

CHAPTER III.

THE great day of the "breaking-up" dawned at last. What preparations there were! A cart-load of chairs for the company—hired—was the first arrival, then a consignment of glass and crockery, baskets of hot-house flowers from popular pupils' "friends"—finally, in a confectioner's van, the supper. Mrs. Penn, her cap strings and curls flying, was nearly mad with excitement and fuss. The Misses Penn were busy, important, and dangerous to accost. The girls from an early tea hour had retired upstairs to indulge in the next best amusement to dancing, viz., dressing. Oh! with what leisurely care were heads tired, white dresses donned, gloves drawn on! How often was the following sentence spoken, with crafty calculation and artless air,—

"You are looking awfully nice, dear. How am I looking?"

Madeline had no trouble with her toilet, the old black, with a lace ruffle and cuffs, and one rose at her neck was all the embellishment she had at her disposal, but she was very busy and in much request, decorating and adorning her more fortunate school-fellows.

The bell rang. Down they all trooped—conscious, coquettish, conceited, important, and filed past Miss Selina, who held an "inspection" in the hall. Miss Selina, whose ace was flushed with excitement to the tint

of her new ruby satin, flushed to a shade that set all her efforts with pearl powder at defiance, and scorned the application of Rowland's Kalydor!

The young ladies passed muster very creditably with a few exceptions, such as "Minnie, your dress is too short," "Fanny, those flowers are frightful!" and they passed into the schoolroom, where, on a raised platform, were seats for the chorus, two pianos, a harmonium, and all the preparations for a concert—the one drawback to the young ladies' absolute felicity, that is, those young ladies who had to perform, and who now awaited the audience in a kind of cold shiver, with clammy hands and beating hearts.

Presently Herr Müller arrived in elaborate evening dress, frilled shirt, white gloves, and a considerable accession of dignity, and talked and scolded, and ordered and encouraged his miserable pupils. Nervous as they were about the audience they were trebly afraid of him, and dared not break down, with his eye upon them, his hand turning over the leaves, his low "counting" in their ears.

The big room filled, filled fast, with day-scholars, their friends, parents, outsiders, and the Misses Penn's own circle (chiefly clerical). There was a very good sprinkling of the sterner sex, for Mrs. Penn's establishment was reputed to board some beauties. Very nice, indeed, the young people looked from the body of the concert-room—so fresh and fair, and young, in their modest white dresses, with their downcast eyes (that saw everything all the same).

Among other facts they noted the presence of all the Wolfertons and Mr. Glyn (whose presence on the occasion Miss Selina attributed solely to her own attractions). She was fifteen years older than him, but what of that? He was old for his age—she was young for hers. She flattered herself that in a becoming dress, with her back well to the light, she did not look an hour more than seven-and-twenty.

By all accounts Mr. Glyn was a briefless barrister, but Selina's share of the family stock was by no means contemptible, and he would "get on" of course. The Wolfertons had said that he was of splendid family, but poor. Strange that he should come to their breaking-up this year, too—made quite a point of it, Amy Wolferton had said. As he pressed her hand she glanced at him from under her light eyelashes, as the delicious conviction thrilled through her bosom that he had not forgotten her—their charming walk from church, the dainty little picnic party at which he had sat beside her, where the second relay of plates had been scanty, and he had asked with regard to the remains of some cold chicken, in the most marked way, "Miss Selina, will you permit me to lay my bones beside yours?" What was that but a proposal, certainly in a somewhat novel form! It meant, undoubtedly, that he hoped that they would share the same grave—the family vault of the blue-blooded Glyns.

How agreeable he was—these barristers always were—how good looking!—very different to Mr. Murphy, the red-haired Irish curate, upon whom her sister had built all her matrimonial hopes—(N.B. and it had been building on a quicksand)—casting a scornful glance at the curate's well-oiled red head immediately to her left.

These complacent reflections were rapidly chasing each other through the good lady's brain, as she sat in an attitude of solicitous attention during the opening cantata, sung by all the bevy of beauty on the platform—a shrewd, keen, calculating woman with regard to everyday matters, school accounts, butchers' bills, extras, and with a lynx eye for the failings and shortcomings of her flock. Where vanity whispered, and where a possible or impossible husband loomed on her horizon—Miss Selina was completely different character and an absolute fool; as giddy as credulous, as feather-headed as any one of the young ladies meekly facing her behind their sheets of music—nay, worse, for everyone has

heard the proverb that "There is no fool like an old one."

Far-seeing crafty girls were clever enough to discover her weak side and use their discovery to their own advantage. They plied her with compliments indifferently inappropriate. They called her "their own beautiful Miss Selina!" hinted she had only "to come, to be seen, and to conquer," &c. And these young ladies were frequently invited to the parlour tea, were taken to concerts, were "let off" on various occasions—and laughed at Miss Selina in their sleeves and called her "a ridiculous old goose, as ugly as sin, and as vain as a peacock!"

It is necessary to reveal Miss Selina in her true colours, in order to explain how a woman in her position could for a moment imagine that a young man would fall in love with her elderly charms, in spite of the overwhelming advantages possessed by at least twenty young rivals—her own pupils.

She had long looked upon "the girls" en masse as her natural enemies, not as pretty creatures of from sixteen to eighteen years of age, with bright eyes, brilliant complexions, and angelic dispositions. She bracketed them in her own mind as disagreeable female children with loud voices, voracious appetites, and aly ways.

She was reluctantly aware that Madeline could no longer be considered "a child;" that some people considered her not bad looking! To her she always looked as if she was painted.

She stared hard at her now, where her black dress made a bed among the first trebles. What a colour! Was she rouged? She looked like a doll. Doll or no doll, Miss Selina made a mental note that she should not be among the happy band who were coming in to supper. She might be getting "ideas" into her head—foolish ideas—people might notice her as they had done last year, and turn her head.

The cantata was concluded. A fierce bravura, performed by a long-fingered young lady with desperate energy, succeeded it. Poor girl! she was trembling with terror as she sat down. What with the audience below her, and Herr Müller behind her, she occupied the proverbial agreeable position of being "between the Devil and the deep sea," and played with a courage that was downright reckless.

The bravura was followed by a duet, the duet by a solo on the harp, then one or two songs. With regard to the last of these, the young performer found her feelings quite too many for her, and after some gurgling in her throat, and sniffing in her handkerchief, she collapsed into floods of tears, was briskly hustled into the background and hidden behind the others, and at a moment's notice Madeline was commanded to take her place and fill the gap in the programme.

Poor Madeline! It had not been intended that she should perform. She had no friends among the audience, no complacent relations to clap, and look important and proud. When her last words died away in dead silence—a silence caused by surprise and emotion—a pause of full a minute, and then a perfect hurricane of applause broke out.

Ladies worked away unaccustomed tears, and clapped in a manner that was bad for their new six-button gloves; their hearts were moved for the moment; some chord had been touched by that fresh young voice, by those half-forgotten old words—a chord that vibrated and woke up old memories, of "the days when they were young"—the "so sad, so sweet the days that are no more."

The men clapped tumultuously, not only because the singer had a lovely voice, and sang from her very heart; but—oh, dear me!—because men will be men, and because the girl in black was uncommonly pretty.

"Auld Robin Grey" was vociferously encouraged; but the fair vocalist was adamant. She only courtseyed timidly, and courtseyed again. No one but herself had seen Miss Selina's emphatic shake of the head, as she met her

cold gray eyes, in that "little look across the crowd"—there was to be no encore.

After the concert the room was cleared for dancing, and Madeline took up her post at the best (the drawing-room) piano, and played first a set of lancers to suit every one going, and to polish off the dowagers and duty dances, then a waltz, then another waltz.

It was very stupid of her. She was placed with her back to the company, and could neither see nor be seen, which was exactly what Miss Selina intended; but the pretty clog was not to be so easily concealed.

More than one partner vainly urged for an introduction (which was smilingly refused). More than one sly young man pleaded fatigue, and halted long in the neighbourhood of the piano, where he could obtain a good view of the pretty pianist.

After the second waltz, played by Maddie's weary fingers, Mr. Glyn came over, and said, as she stood up, selecting the next piece on the programme,—

"Miss Grant, we have all to thank you for your capital playing," holding out his hand as he spoke; "and now I hope you will give me the pleasure of the next dance?"

She took his hand timidly, and shook her head.

"Ah! I beg your pardon!" he said, glancing quickly at her black dress. "Let me at least take you to the tea-room; you must want something after all your exertions?"

"No, thank you very much," she answered, once more sitting down before the piano. "I have had my tea."

"You don't mean to say you are going to play again?" he asked, in a tone of indignant astonishment.

"Yes, I am going to play all the evening," she answered, turning over the leaves and finding the place, with slightly heightened colour.

"But last year you danced all the evening. What does it mean?"

"It means, Mr. Glyn, that I was then one of the boarders; now I am only a pupil-teacher. Things are changed—it is my duty to play; and"—faltering slightly—"I—like it!"

"I'm afraid I hardly believe you, Miss Grant," he replied; "but I suppose must. Will you permit me to stay and turn over the leaves?"

"No—no," very eagerly, "please do not. You must dance."

"*Je n'en vois pas la nécessité*," he quoted, seating himself deliberately as he spoke. "I'm afraid you have lost a relative," he continued, in a lower voice. "Your father?"

"I have, in one sense," she answered, now striking up another waltz. "My father has not been heard of for a whole year. When he last wrote he had lost nearly all his fortune in some mines in Mexico; he has never written since."

She paused expressively.

"And have you no friends in this country?" "No, none that I have any claim on. I have been here at school since I was nine years old."

"And, good heavens! You don't mean to tell me that you have no resource but to stay on here as pupil-teacher?" he demanded, disbelievingly.

"No. You see, I have no home—no home in this country. I had one—long ago—in Jamaica, the only one I ever knew."

"Do you remember it?" he asked, rather abstractedly.

"Oh, yes. I remember the long white verandah, the bright blue sea, my black nurse, Aunt Nannie, the gay tropical climate. I can shut my eyes and see it all now, and all the black people working in the canes."

"Has your father never come home to see you all these years?"

"Never. I'm afraid—I'm afraid—"

She paused, unable to articulate, but still kept playing steadily on.

"I'm afraid," he said, in a low voice, bending forward, "that you are not happy here," contrasting rapidly in his own mind the bril-

liant figure she made last year as belle of the party, the cynosure of all eyes, to what she appeared now—the poor piano-playing drudge, and not so much as rewarded with a "thank you," and dressed in a gown that even he could see was both old-fashioned and shabby, and threadbare.

"Oh, Mr. Glyn!" said a springy staccato voice at his elbow. "You naughty man, why are you not dancing? Come away; I can't have you taking off Miss Grant's attention—you dreadful person. Come away, darling; we are going to have another set of Lancers, and you shall be my partner," and with this heavy bribe he was summarily detached from his post beside the piano and carried off by the triumphant Miss Selina, swearing to himself, inwardly.

Madeline played and played until she felt that her fingers had no feeling, and were just as stiff and mechanical as a machine's.

At last supper released her. She stood up, half expectant, as the others flocked past two-and-two, each happy girl provided with a partner, beaming and giggling and blushing, as the case might be.

As she stood, a bony, much-ringed hand was laid heavily upon her shoulder, and she saw Miss Selina, who had accosted Mr. Glyn.

"Madeline, my dear," she whispered, "I'm sorry there is no room for you. I'll send you out a sandwich—and—something."

Then she passed on, leaving poor Madeline alone in that big empty room, with a lump in her throat and tears of disappointment in her eyes.

She indignantly declined the subsequent sandwich brought up on a plate by the sympathetic cook, who vowed "it was a shame;" but met with no encouragement to speak her mind on the subject.

Madeline knew she dare not go to bed, she had still to play—"it was in the bond;" so she had not that small comfort. Nor might she venture yet to indulge herself in the relief of a thoroughly good cry.

"What a difference money makes?" she said to herself, bitterly. "Look at the contrast between this night and last year. Who would have believed, I least of all, that night twelve months I should be sitting here alone. However, I don't suppose," she said, aloud, with a catch in her voice, "that anyone misses me."

In this supposition she was wrong. Many people missed "the girl in black," who had sung the song of the concert, who had played unremittently all the evening, who had such a shabby dress and such a sweetly pretty face.

Not a few of Mrs. Penn's smiling guests, who were eating her good things and sipping her champagne, were registering a black mark against her all the same, and thinking that they would be sorry that any friend of theirs filled the post of her "pupil-teacher."

Mr. Glyn "dissembled," as they say in plays, and was very agreeable to his fair partner, Miss Selina (but inwardly he was raging).

With professional cleverness he drew her out and cross-examined her with regard to Miss Grant, and she, her tongue unloosed by two glasses of champagne, her vanity stimulated by his attentions (to her plate), was completely off her guard, and as easily turned inside out as any quaking witness at the Old Bailey.

She expounded on Mr. Grant's enormities, the sums laid out on his daughter, the fact, that, "but for them, she would be friendless and homeless, probably begging from door to door. The man was dead. The girl had no friends, and only for their charity," here she pained, impressively, expecting Mr. Glyn to fill up the blank with some neat and appropriate speech, but for once she was doomed to disappointment.

"Only for your charity she would be a governess, would she not?" he remarked, carelessly. "With such musical talents she is sure of a lucrative situation—a hundred a-year or so. But of course, under your roof

she has all that she can wish; for—a happy home among her old companions? And anyone can see that Mrs. Penn is a mother to her!" he concluded, with immovable features.

Miss Penn started, and became of a finer shade of crimson. This idea about a governess at one hundred pounds a-year was something novel.

The girl was accomplished! Was Mr. Glyn speaking ironically when he alluded to a happy home? Impossible!

His face was as unmoved, his eyes as smiling, his manner as sociable and friendly as possible. It was a foolish idea, and she immediately dismissed it from her mind and plunged into a discussion on platonic friendships and a second liberal helping of most excellent truffle.

Mr. Glyn managed to have a few words with Mrs. Wolferton after supper. He stated his case concisely, pointed out Madeline, and commended her to that kind lady's notice. Mrs. Wolferton was the mother of Fred, Mr. Glyn's schoolfellow, college friend, and chum, and was very fond of Hugh, whom she had known from a very bold boy in jackets upwards.

She listened to the sorry history of the pretty Miss Grant, and her motherly heart was touched.

She begged to be introduced to her.

"Remembered her well," she declared, "last year. Hoped she would come and see her during the holidays, and, finally, being an old lady who believed in deeds as well as words, took off her gloves, removed a jingling bracelet, and seated herself at the piano for the remainder of the night, in spite of Mrs. Penn's horrified expostulations, saying to Madeline, 'now, my dear, go and dance. Hugh, Miss Grant has not danced one step to-night!'"

This hint was unnecessary. Already Hugh and Miss Grant were at the other end of the room, and already a very portentous frown had settled on Miss Selina's brow, but it availed nothing.

Madeline was young—only eighteen—very pretty, very fond of dancing—dance she would when she could.

Mr. Glyn was a capital partner. He introduced her to various others, who voted the girl in black quite the prettiest they had seen for months, and who were the more eager to make her acquaintance and to dance with her from seeing that their attentions were highly displeasing to the Penn family.

Madeline danced till the very end of the evening, although Miss Selina had whispered fiercely in her ear as she stood near her,—

"Pushing, forward minx!"

She knew she would have to pay for this enjoyment on the morrow dearly, and was resolved to drain the cup of pleasure to the very last drop.

She looked quite lovely, if a little defiant. The excitement of dancing had made her eyes brighter and her colour deeper. Mr. Glyn told himself that she was the prettiest, aye, and the nicest, girl he had ever met in the whole course of his life; but that he must not lose his head—a briefless barrister could not afford to admire a pretty, penniless pupil teacher.

CHAPTER IV.

THE holidays commenced, the young ladies went, school broken up, and Madeline had now the whole big, empty school-room and the much-disputed fire entirely to herself. She was monarch of all she surveyed, but she was nearly as lonely as Robinson Crusoe on his desert island. The Miss Penns were not covetous of her company. She was never bidden to the friendly luncheon parties, the merry little suppers that repeatedly took place. She on these occasions had a plate of cold meat or bread-and-butter in the privacy of the schoolroom. There was no necessity, the Miss Penns averred, to intro-

dance her to their friends. It would be a mistake to spoil her. She was concealed enough.

But Mrs. Wolferton had no scruples. She called, she wrote, she persevered, she carried her point. She insisted on having Madeline "to spend the day with her." What a change from the schoolroom at Penchester House! That dainty drawing-room, with its cosy chairs, mirrors, pictures, heavy portières, and Persian rugs, and Mrs. Wolferton knitting and talking, and telling her to "make herself at home!" Then there was a dainty luncheon—a drive—a sociable dinner—the Wolfertons, Mr. Glyn, and one or two others—music—perhaps a round game—in the midst of which would come "Miss Grant's servant, if you please;" but Mr. Glyn and Fred Wolferton would escort Miss Grant all the same, leaving her on Mrs. Penn's doorstep, not coming in, not making any move in that direction—as Miss Selina angrily remarked from behind the drawing-room blind. Miss Selina had become very "cold" in her manner to Madeline; in fact, she was more than cold, she was actually hostile, and glared at the unlucky pupil-teacher as if she were some kind of domestic reptile.

She had nourished in her bosom Mrs. Wolferton's praises. Mrs. Wolferton's notice of Madeline did not please her at all, but, happy thought, Mrs. Wolferton was going away—going to the south of France to escape the east winds, and when she came back she would have forgotten her fancy. Miss Selina judged other people by her own standard.

Tickets for the theatre "for Mrs. and the Misses Penn and Miss Grant, with Mr. Fred Wolferton's compliments" (he had not left home, and Mr. Glyn was still his guest).

To go or not to go? that was the question debated with great spirit in Mrs. Penn's own bedroom. They would accept with pleasure; but Madeline Grant—must they take her too? There was no other alternative, alas! If she had only had a slight cold; but she was never better in her life. They had no excuse beyond their own disinclination. Go she must.

Very grudgingly they announced the news to her as she sat poring over her schoolroom fire, dividing her attention between a child's story book and Mr. Glyn—needless to tell you who had the largest share.

She could not help thinking a great deal of Mr. Glyn. It was wrong, it was foolish. Probably he never gave her a thought. Her cheeks became crimson at the idea, but an inward voice whispered another story. If he did not think of her why did he always monopolize her at Mrs. Wolferton's, sit beside her at cards, usurp Fred's place at the piano? Why had he begged a flower to keep? Why had he hinted that only for his poverty he would marry, or, at least, ask some girl to marry him who had no home. Who could that girl be but herself? Dare she whisper even to her inmost heart that she believed he meant her—Madeline Grant?

If he had not thought of her why did he tell her so much about himself, his old home, his dead father and mother, his rich and high and mighty relations, who looked upon empty pockets as a crime, but who patronised him, asked him to dinner now and then, and had hinted that if he were to put himself into the tallow, or cotton, or soap market, where heiresses were plentiful and his were scarce, he might, on the strength of his connections and his aristocratic appearance, land one of these young women and, perhaps, fifty thousand pounds?

But these suggestions he had not taken in "good part," between ourselves, and equally between ourselves, he asked himself what his grand relations would say if they knew that he was head over ears in love with a pretty little pupil-teacher—a perfect lady, certainly, and not unworthy to bear the name of Glyn, but absolutely without sixpence.

The poor child liked him, too; he was sure of it, but honour set her seal upon his lips. He could not offer her a decent home—could not be sure that what barely sufficed for one

was a comfortable maintenance for two. Best leave her if he could, in maiden meditation fancy free—leave her for some luckier fellow, leave his heart in her unconscious keeping.

This visit to the theatre was to be the very last meeting he would allow himself, and then for his dismal old top chambers in the Temple and work. Plenty of work is an excellent and healing medicine for any affection of the heart, so he had read, so he had been told, and now he would test its efficacy.

The great evening came, and with hot and trembling fingers Madeline made her modest toilet, donned her hat and jacket, and awaited the rest of the party in the hall in a state of anxious suspense. She had never been in a theatre in her life. Her heart was beating fast with happy anticipation—what a night to look back upon! Mr. Irving as *Hamlet*, what she had often longed to see, and now she was going to see it with Mr. Glyn.

It was too much pleasure all squeezed into one evening; if it could only be spread out over three or four days instead of all to be over in two or three hours!

"Madeline," said a sharp voice, that startled her from her delicious expectations, "come into the drawing-room for a moment, I wish to speak to you," leading the way into that cold apartment, lit at present by one gas burner, and innocent of such extravagance as a fire. "I wish to speak to you," proceeded Miss Selina, firmly, "about the ridiculous way you are going on with Mr. Glyn. You ought to be ashamed of yourself!"

"Why, what have I done, Miss Selina? What do you mean?" she asked, breathless with horror.

"What have you not done? Flirted with him, run after him to Mrs. Wolferton's, made yourself the common talk of the whole place. Don't imagine for a moment that he thinks of you as anything but a silly little chit of a schoolgirl, who is head over ears in love with him, and whom it amuses him to draw out and laugh at with Mr. Fred. Wolferton!"

"Miss Selina!" cried Madeline, stung to the quick, and turning very pale, and grasping the back of a chair as she spoke, "how dare you say such things? You know they are not true. I went to Mrs. Wolferton's because she was kind—because she asked me, I never ran after Mr. Glyn—never!"

"And pray what are you doing to-night?" with grim ironical interrogation.

"If you think that I am running after him I can easily reassure you. I can stay at home. I (oh! what a wretch was this; but her pride was roused) will stay at home," taking off her hat as she spoke. "The matter is easily settled."

Not so easily as she imagined, for at this moment loud, cheery, masculine voices in the hall broke in upon them. The door was widely opened; enter Fred Wolferton, Mr. Murphy the curate (hush! you must not tell the bishop), an elderly escort for Mrs. Penn, and Mr. Glyn. And although Madeline declared, with much embarrassment, that she was "not going," most positively—as she could give no reason for her sudden announcement and was dressed for the theatre—public opinion carried the day.

She replaced her hat in answer to an impatient signal from Miss Selina and went; but the gift had been removed from her gingerbread, and all the way in the train (they were fifteen miles from River Bank) she was unusually pale and silent, and pointedly avoided Mr. Glyn, to Miss Selina's great content. But Mr. Glyn would not be avoided. He ignored Miss Selina's hints, the vacant place she patted invitingly beside her, as much as to say, "Come and sit here and be happy," and went and placed himself at the other side of Madeline, whose eyes were straying over the theatre in blank surprise.

It was not a bit like what she thought it would be.

She noted the gorgeous gilded ceiling, the florid ornaments, the draped stage, many gay

parties rapidly filling the boxes, and, once the overture commenced, she began to realize that she was enjoying herself extremely, and would not allow Miss Selina's dreadful accusation to spoil her whole evening.

Miss Selina felt that she had been publicly slighted.

What is that line about "a woman scorned?" She felt capable of anything. Her rage against Mr. Glyn was as consuming and as hot as her jealousy of Madeline.

They should suffer for their insolence, as she called it, meaning the simple fact of their sitting together, talking with much animation, and looking very happy.

Yes, she would find a way to pay them out. And as she sat silent, her eyes upon the drop-scene, she was revolving portentous schemes in her mind that would not tend to their benefit, to say the least of it.

The orchestra was playing a wild Polish dance, its burthen full of sadness, despair, and weird fantastic chords at one period, at another gaily frolicsome and full of outbursts of mad mirth—an air that exercised a strange influence upon them, specially on one—Madeline—in her present state of highly strung nerves and repressed mental excitement.

She drank in that wild, wild air with eager ears, and never forgot it as long as she lived. It always reminded her of this night—this momentous night, the crisis of her existence. She glanced at the stage, at the big, red, mysterious curtain, the bowed figures in the orchestra, the floridly ornamented theatre, the brightly-filled—nay, crowded boxes, and asked herself, "Was it all real?"

But the moment for the drama had arrived: the curtain rose slowly on *Hamlet*, or rather on the gravedigger, and from that instant until it finally descended, three hours later, every glance, every thought of hers was, as it were, chained to the stage.

At least it was over. Mr. Irving and Miss Terry had been called three times before the curtain smelt cheering and clapping that was vociferous as it was well deserved. And now people began to move, to look about for cloaks, tippets, opera-glasses, and to hurry away as if their life depended on it.

The crowd had been great; it was snowing hard outside, and now the crush was simply awful.

"I'll take care of you, Miss Grant," said Mr. Glyn eagerly, as they found a footing in the passage among hundreds of the audience.

"Very well, mind you do," observed Miss Selina, impressively; "we are sure to get separated. Look here, Madeline," suddenly lowering her voice, "meet us at the bottom of the station steps. Mr. Glyn will look after you; mind you are not late—it's the last train." And with this injunction she was borne away in the crowd, her red opera cloak soon hidden from their gaze.

"Let us wait till the rush is over, and take it quietly, there's plenty of time," observed Mr. Glyn, struggling to look at his watch. "We will get a hansom and be at the station in no time, before them, ten to one, for they are a large party."

Inwardly he marvelled at Miss Selina's arrangement; he was not aware that she had her reasons, and he was too well satisfied to question the matter.

After a little he made his way down to the portico, secured a hansom, and drove with his charge to the place of rendezvous, the foot of the station steps—a covered place, luckily, for the snow was falling thick and fast.

They waited five minutes, no one came, no one to meet them—ten minutes, still no one; the hurrying crowd that passed up too had ceased.

"I hope they have not come to grief," said Mr. Glyn, and suddenly looking at his watch. "I'll tell you what, we can't wait any longer or we will miss our train; we must run for it as it is," running quickly up the steps. Too late—too late. The red light of the last train

to Ferratone was just vanishing into the big tunnel.

What was to be done? He stood for a moment irresolute. It was the last train, and it was gone.

A cab was the first idea. Leaving Madeline, who was benumbed with waiting and a good deal frightened, he hurried to the cab rank. It was empty. He waylaid a passing cabbie, and told him the state of the case. "Fifteen miles in deep snow! couldn't be done, sir—not for no price." The same story was repeated elsewhere; there was nothing for it but to go back to Madeline, who was shivering over the dying fire in the ladies' waiting room.

"Well?" she asked, raising her face expectantly.

"No cab to be had," with assumed sang froid.

"No cab to be had!" she echoed, her hazel eyes darkening and dilating with horror. "Oh! Mr. Glyn, can we walk?"—mad project.

"No; I fancy the best thing to do will be to stay here all night—I mean at the King's Arms—and go on by the first train in the morning. I will go to the landlady and make her promise to look after you, and I will find a lodging elsewhere. It will be all right," reassuringly. "Are you certain that Miss Selina said the foot of the steps?" he added, as if struck by an after-thought.

"Yes, quite certain," resolutely.

"Here," he called to a porter, "did you see a party looking for any people by the last train—three ladies, three gentlemen?"

"Yes, sir; stout old lady—two elderly ladies." "Oh, ye gods, if the Miss Penns heard him!" Three gentle. They did seem looking; but one of the ladies said you was sure to come, and bundled 'em all into a carriage.

"Well, we can do no good waiting here," he said at length. "Come along; there's nothing to be frightened at, Miss Grant (Miss Grant was crying quietly, and very much alarmed, indeed). You will be back in time for breakfast. It was all an accident, a misunderstanding, and if any one is to blame or to be blamed, let it be me."

"Oh, I know they will be very, very angry," said Madeline, in a tone of deep dejection. "I don't know what they will say."

"Not when I explain everything to their entire satisfaction? I will go security that you will not get into any trouble."

And, really, half-an-hour later, as Madeline sat with her feet on the fender of a comfortable bedroom in the King's Arms, a magnificent apartment to her delighted eyes, with a roaring fire before her, a glass of hot negus in her hand, and a sandwich beside her on the table, she began to cheer up, and take a brighter view of the situation.

What harm was it, after all, missing a train? Nothing so very dreadful. She could only get a scolding at the worst.

But Mr. Glyn, as he fought his way to another hotel on foot, with the collar of his coatwell turned up, and his head bent against the beating sleet and snow, looked graver than he had done when he was talking so cheerfully to Madeline.

It was a very awkward business, and he had an unpleasant conviction that Miss Selina had been at the bottom of it.

However, time would tell. Perhaps the worst would be "a had quarter of an hour" with old Mrs. Penn.

(To be continued.)

Be careful of the books you read as of the company you keep; for your habits and character will be as much influenced by the former as by the latter.

Great talents for conversation should be attended with great politeness. He who eclipses others owes them great civilities; and whatever a mistaken vanity may tell us, it is better to please in conversation than shine in it.

ONCE FOR ALL.

—O— CHAPTER V.

FIFTEEN years passed away.

All Rome was ringing with the praise of the great sculptor, Cecil Maybrooke. Not Rome only—the whole world knew his name, and bowed in homage to his genius.

His groups and figures expressed so much more than the new beauty of form and feature. Poetry was caught and imprisoned in the marble. Human love was idealized as though it had been purified by suffering. There was always something sad in his work—something that would bring the tears very near to the eyes of the beholders. His last work on Ariadne had crowned his fame.

There was such pathos in the deserted maiden's pose, in the droop of the head, and in the fingers that were unconsciously crushing all the fragrance from the blossoms she held in her clasp.

It was the one theme which occupied the art world, and all ranks of society.

His uncle's words, though at the time they had fallen upon dulled ears, had borne fruit.

Fate had been harsh to him, but genius and endurance had triumphed; he had conquered adversity, and risen to the highest pinnacle of fame.

Princes, poets, statesmen, and philosophers were proud to claim friendship with the man whose story, when it broke upon the astonished ears of society fifteen years before, had caused more than a nine days' wonder.

When he was in England the highest in the land welcomed him to their houses. Fair princesses showered invitations upon him, and counted their *réceptions* a failure if he were not there.

Many a bright eye grew brighter, many a gentle heart beat more quickly, when he was near, when his thoughtful glance fell upon the owners, or his liquid tones addressed them in the language of chivalry.

He was courteous and deferential in his manner to all women, high or low, but nothing more.

No woman had ever heard words of love from him since the day that Ozellah Caversham had rejected his love, and flung it back upon himself. That passion had burnt itself out, but no other human love had taken its place. No woman's voice had power to charm his ears. No woman's form or face, however lovely, could make his heart beat one throb the faster. The Southern firestorm which had made his love such exquisite bliss and such exquisite pain had gone for ever. He was cold, passionless, calm. He lived in and for his art alone, and she had proved no fickle mistress. If he were fathful to her, she in return had showered benefits upon him. After the shattering of his hopes he had gone to Italy.

Despite the entreaties of his uncle he would not stay at Maybrooke Hall; he felt he could not live in the same country which held his false love.

He accepted the barest pittance from his uncle's hands, just enough to keep body and soul together, though the latter would gladly have shared Henry Maybrooke's vast wealth with the son who, but for the accident of his birth, would have inherited all.

But Cecil was firm in his determination; he would accept the sum he stated, and no more. He threw himself heart and soul into his work, and his labour brought its own reward.

Little by little the gnawing pain at his heart grew duller, till at last there was nothing left but the healed cicatrix. He could bear to think of Ozellah as the wife of another without a pang; but all the same, no other woman had taken the place she had left vacant in his heart. He had expended all the wealth of his affection upon her, and had left none for any one else to share. He often stayed at Maybrooke Hall when he visited England.

He was always a welcome visitor there. His

aunt and uncle were very pleased to have him with them, and showed it plainly, but it was little Nesta who testified the greatest delight at his presence.

While still a child, she would run to him, putting up her rosebud mouth to be kissed, and would make him the confidante of all her childish troubles.

She would make him her obedient slave, and order him about with a childish imperiousness that often made the grave, stern, look on his brow relax into a smile.

But latterly there had been a change in her manner. Though not less cordial she had been less warm and impulsive. There were no more confidences between them; she seemed shy and constrained in his presence.

Cecil noticed it, but did not trouble about it. It was only a child's caprices, he said to himself. He always thought of her as a child. He forgot that fifteen years had changed the child to a woman, with all a woman's capacity for love and suffering. Though outwardly he did not show his forty years yet, they had left their mark upon him; he felt old, whereas Nesta, despite of her two-and-twenty years, was very youthful, both in appearance and feeling.

She spent the greater portion of her life at Maybrooke Hall. She had been brought up rather in seclusion under the eyes of her parents. They did not want her to be spoiled by society, they did not want their darling to become a professional beauty, so they had not often taken her to London, and the few times she had been she did not care for it.

The false glare and glitter shocked her. She saw through the insincerity of the compliments paid to her because she was Henry Maybrooke's heiress by the painted and jewelled old women who would have made much of her for the sake of her father's wealth.

She shrank from the boldly expressed admiration of the men who would gladly have secured so rich a prize.

They were so different from Cecil; he never flattered or paid insincere compliments; he only spoke the truth.

Unconsciously she had set up an ideal, and that ideal was Cecil.

Since the day she had found him lying in the grass, and he had carried her home with her curly head lying upon his breast, a tiny child of seven, she had cherished a tender recollection of him, which had grown with her growth, till at last he had a shrine in her heart which excluded the image of any other man.

She was not aware that she loved him, she only knew that life seemed fairer when he was present, and that it took a dull grey tone in his absence.

Every tree and stone about her home was dear to her. She loved the trees and forests, the swelling uplands, the smiling valleys, the crystal waters. The red deer were her friends, and would come at her call; even the wild birds would fly down to be fed from her hands. She loved them all; they added to the beauty and tranquillity of her life, but she loved them tenfold when Cecil was there amongst them.

The sun seemed to shine the brighter, the birds to sing more joyfully, the flowers to bloom with more brilliant radiance, the water to ripple along more musically when he was by her side, as she strolled along beneath the leafy aisles formed by the arching branches of the forest trees.

Whenever she knew that he had returned to England from his Italian home she waited anxiously for his coming to Maybrooke Hall, though when he had come she would be silent and shy in his presence. Still to know that he was there was enough. She was restless and uneasy when he was in London; she had some vague fear that one of the forward, fast young ladies, who roused and talked slang, might catch him in her toils, and she could not bear the thought of his belonging to another.

She need not have feared; Cecil was proof against women's wiles. He had fallen once

under the spell of the mighty passion, but it seemed as though he never would again.

If she could have seen him in the Countess of Highacres' splendid salons, surrounded by all that was loveliest in the beau-monde, and the careless way in which he received their delicately veiled and graceful flatteries, she would have known how little he cared for their admiration, and what a small amount of thought he bestowed upon the fair flatterers.

Even Nesta's foolish, loving, jealous little heart would have been satisfied, for she would have seen that if he did not love her neither did he care in the slightest for any of the lovely women with whom he mingled in the whirl of London society.

The Countess of Highacres was a leader in the world of fashion. For ten years she had worn the golden chains which she had voluntarily assumed, and no one from her exterior would have guessed how they galled and chafed her.

They had been ten years of unmitigated misery to her. She loathed her elderly husband with a loathing that amounted to positive hatred; the touch of his hand sent a shudder of repulsion through her; she sickened with horror at the hateful carresses which she was obliged to endure, for had she not sold herself to him?

There were times when she could have cursed him, with his leering ways and would-be juvenility. But who could tell this? None. Society judges from the surface, and society thought she was a model wife.

She appeared everywhere with him, she dressed exquisitely, she wore the Highacres diamonds with a regal grace, she received his guests with the most perfect aplomb, and was cited everywhere as a paragon of wifely perfection.

None could have told how bitterly she regretted the step she had taken, how madly she longed to be able to undo the past; none, save herself and the man who had bought her.

He had heard the name she had muttered in her dreams, and taunted and glibed her with the knowledge, and with the fact that she had sold herself for gold when her heart was another's.

But though he took very good care in private to draw tighter the chains that galled her, before people he was studiously polite and affectionate. He knew that she hated the display of his affection worse than his gibes, and acted accordingly. But after ten years release had come to her.

A fit of the gout carried off the Right Honourable the Earl of Highacres, and at thirty-four his beautiful wife was left a widow.

Never did woman welcome her freedom from bondage, that was worse than slavery, more cordially than Ozellah welcomed hers.

All at once she seemed to regain some portion of her lost youth. Outwardly observant of all the forms of woe, her heart was yet singing a psalm of thankfulness and delight.

She was once more free. She cared not that the Earl, carrying his jealousy beyond the grave, had made a will leaving everything away from her should she marry again.

She had learned that true love far outweighed gold and all other earthly dross. She would have given up all for which she had bartered her youth without one sigh, if by so doing she could have won Cecil back to her side.

She would have gone to him gladly had he been penniless and nameless as when he had poured out his heart in passionate, futile prayers to her, instead of being, as he now was, high up on the ladder of fame.

But five years had gone by since her husband's death, and she had not forfeited his wealth by marrying again.

Cecil's prayer had been granted. He had prayed that he might never look upon her face again until he could see it without its causing his heart to beat the faster, and her

presence now caused him no more emotion than any other woman of his acquaintance.

As far as love was concerned his heart seemed dead within him. He was an occasional visitor at her mansion in Belgravia, but he visited her as he visited many other titled ladies.

She could detect no sign in his manner to her of the tenderness he had once felt for her, but hope did not leave her; she saw that no other woman had usurped the empire she once held over his heart.

He would return to her, she felt sure; the love that he had given to her could not die away. She had been mad when she had thrown away such a priceless gift, but it was not too late to woo him back.

She was a very beautiful woman still. Her thirty-nine years sat lightly upon her. Her red gold hair shone with as burnished a lustre as ever; and if her complexion owed more to art than of yore, it was so artistically done that it was hard to detect where nature ended and art stepped in. Her figure was beautifully moulded, and she threw in the shade many a younger woman.

Her taste in dress was unimpeachable. Her house was filled with the rarest works of art, among which several of Cecil's groups were prominent. Her wealth enabled her to gratify her artistic tastes, though it could not fill the aching void in her heart.

She longed for Cecil as the hart longs for water, and he seldom came near her. She looked for his presence as eagerly as a young girl watches for her lover's coming, and she felt the same chill disappointment when day after day passed without bringing him.

She treasured the letters that he had written her in the days of long ago. They were faded now, those letters in which his hand had traced words burning of deathless love, but she treasured them as people treasure the relics of the beloved dead.

She looked on them till her head drooped, and her eyes grew dim with a bitter pain, and her lips quivered as she gazed. She had forsaken him; but she knew now that she had erred. She would have given her life to have felt his kiss once more upon her lips. She would have given more than her life could she have done so to win back the love that she had lost.

Meanwhile Cecil had been passing the summer days at Maybrooke Hall in calm content.

To the man who was sated with the world's applause, the tranquil rest of its lovely woods came with a double charm after the turmoil of cities.

He had the poet's love of nature, and in the solitudes of the forest he could dream of some new conception in his art. He lived only for it. He had given himself up wholly to it, but nevertheless the relaxation from work which he always indulged in when he came to Maybrooke Hall was delightful to him. He would wander at will through the forest glades, listening to the songs of the birds and the busy hum of insect life which always had power to charm his ear. He would watch the red deer as they browsed, with some magnificent stag with branching antlers keeping sentinel; or the stately flight of the herons across the marshes.

He loved these solitudes far better than the busy haunts of lives; they brought back to him his youth when life had seemed so fair, and no shadow of the fate which was to fall upon him darkened it.

One day he penetrated far into the depths of the forest. He came upon a lovely spot. In the centre of a glade was a small brown tarn frequented by the teal and mallards, who winged their flight from the marshes. The edges were covered with feathery ferns, which took a brighter hue from the moisture in which they lived. Flocks of birds came to drink and bathe themselves in its cool waters undisturbed by any intruders on their solitude.

He was walking dreamily along, drinking in

the beauty of the spot, when he suddenly paused, startled; resting near the edge of the pool, with her head leaning back against a mossy tree trunk, lay a girl asleep.

Her hat was off, and lying beside her. A book which she had been reading had fallen out of her hand and lay on the soft turf among a profusion of wild flowers and ferns that she had evidently been gathering.

Crouched close beside her with his head upon her knee was a magnificent St. Bernard dog, who had a wreath of wild flowers encircling his massive neck in place of a collar.

He was perfectly still and motionless, all except his eyes, which were alert and watchful, and seemed to say that he would guard his fair mistress while life remained in him.

At the first sounds of Cecil's footsteps the dog had uttered a low growl, but without changing his position in the nightst, or waking the sleeper. However, when he recognized the intruder the growl ceased, and a slow and majestic wag of his tail testified his welcome to the new comer.

The sleeping girl was Nesta Maybrooke.

A fair picture she made.

The sun filtering through the leaves of the trees overhead cast some stray beams across her face and head, lending a softer hue to her fair cheek and a brighter tint to the locks of gold, which were as curly and rebellious now as in the days of her childhood. A few tendrils of ivy and some delicate pale blossoms were twined among the threads of gold. The rosybud lips were parted in a happy smile, just showing the pearly teeth.

It was evident that her dreams were pleasant ones.

Cecil held his breath in admiration.

Her beauty came to him like a revelation. He had always thought of her as a pretty child, now he recognized that she was a woman, and a very lovely one too.

Cecil felt something of the old pain, the old unrest, wake in him as he gazed at her.

The smile of woman's eyes had no beauteous light for him, the whisper of woman's allurement no solace for his ear, yet there was enough of the poet in him to make him vaguely feel some memories of his youth arise, when a woman had been the whole world to him, and to make him bend tenderly over that bright head with its coronal of flowers.

Love had long been dead in him; it had gone with his youth,—never, he believed like that youth to revive—yet the sight of this sleeping maiden had stirred the chord in his heart which he had thought was broken for ever.

He did not know that the hours seemed so long to her when he was away from her presence, that the mere distant sound of his voice filled her heart with joy so intense that it was almost pain, that the forest-world about her wore a light it had never had before, that when he was with her the whole earth seemed changed and transfigured—he did not know, but he was soon to learn.

As he bent over her, gazing into her flushed face, her lips opened, and a soft murmur issued from them, "Cecil, my love."

He started back, then smiled at his own folly. Of course it could not be—she was only dreaming.

The movement he made awakened her. She opened her eyes, the happy smile still upon her lips. "Cecil, my own!" she murmured, half dreaming yet.

Then as she recognized the hero of her dreams bending over her she sprang to her feet in maidenly confusion, scattering her wild flowers on the surface of the water, blushing a more rosy-red than the deep-hued blossoms at her feet, and looking in her wild, shy grace like a startled fawn.

"Nesta, little one, were you dreaming of me?" Cecil's voice was very gentle, very tender, as he addressed her in the endearing terms he had used in her childhood.

She looked up at him with the startled look still in her blue eyes. "Yes, no,—that is, I mean—" she stammered.

He saw that in the blue orbs that told him she loved him, and the sudden knowledge touched and charmed him.

It was years since a woman's love had any power over him, but he felt vaguely that this girl before him had the power to kindle the embers in his heart, which were only smouldering, though he had thought them extinguished for ever.

"Nesta," he said, seeing her confusion and wishing to put her at her ease. "How is it I find you here? It is too far for you to come alone. To be sure, there are not many people who penetrate so far into these woods, but still you might meet tramps, and you would be defenceless against them."

"Oh! no; not with Sir Galahad, he would not let anyone touch me," she answered, fondling the noble head of her favourite.

"Oh! I forgot, you have a staunch protector there, still it is very far from your home. Suppose a sudden storm should come on, all Sir Galahad's chivalry could not protect you from a soaking, or avert the dart of the lightning," he said, half jestingly, half earnestly.

"I do not wish to think of anything so dreadful," she said, lightly. My father and mother let me roam where I will with Sir Galahad; they know I am safe with him. I discovered the tarn one day in our rambles, and it has been a favourite spot with me since, only I do not come to it very often, because it is so far."

"I am glad to hear that," he said, "because I do not think it safe for you even with Sir Galahad."

"I have never met anyone," she said.

"But I have," he answered significantly.

"This day I met two very rough-looking men, who, I think were poachers, and as they carried guns, I am afraid Sir Galahad's chance would have been small against them had they come upon you when you were sleeping."

"Ceil," she said, her cheeks paling. "You have taken the romance from my tarn. I shall be afraid to come here again."

"I did not mean to frighten you, Nesta," he returned, "but you shall not give up your visits here while I am staying at Maybrooke Hall, for I will come with you whenever you wish it; but I am sure you must be tired. Lean on me while we return."

His solicitude was very sweet to her. She was tired, though she would not own it. She had dropped asleep from fatigue beside the tarn, but to walk thus by his side she would have gone on unconscious of fatigue, till her limbs refused to support her any more.

That blissful walk was followed by many others.

Since the knowledge of her love had broken upon him, Cecil found a charm in her society which he had once thought no woman would ever bestow upon him again.

He had gone to her father at once, and explained the matter to him, for he would not attempt to speak to her of love without his sanction.

For the first time for several years he remembered that he had no legal right to the name he bore, and he did not know whether her father would bestow her upon a nameless man.

Great, then, was his joy when his uncle, taking his hand in a hearty clasp, cried, "Woo her by all means, Cecil; there is not another man living to whom I would more willingly give her."

"Thank you, sir," said Cecil, brokenly. "I will guard with my life the treasure you have given me. I never thought that she loved me. I am nearly twice her age, and she is so young and fair."

"You must have been blind, Cecil," said his uncle, quietly; "her mother and I have seen it for a long time, but we feared that you would never reciprocate her love. I am thankful, indeed, that my darling's life will not be blighted."

"Truly, I must have been blind," muttered Cecil.

(To be continued.)

YOU AND I.

THE years wheel on in a ceaseless whirl,

And many have fled since I

Your letter read—your first sweet one—

And more since we said "good-bye."

I live in a cottage, small and brown,

With roses that climb o'er the wall,

With flowers that bloom at every pane,

And the sunshine dappling the hall.

And sometimes here on a summer day,

You pass in your carriage grand,

And I catch a gleam of your plain gold ring

On your white familiar hand,

As you lift your hat in your haughty way—

I remember it better than all—

And your proud eyes look, with a cold contempt,

At my home so pretty and small.

But oh! sweetheart, though I used to shrink

From the angry glance of your eye,

The days when I cared for station and wealth

Have for ever passed me by!

And I did not shrink when I met your glance,

Though scornful and cold: for yet

I knew that, deep in your heart of hearts,

There was only a saddest regret.

And I think you sighed as I kissed my child—

My baby—with eyes of blue;

Sweet emblem of faith and changeless love

To my husband, tender and true;

For you know that never, in all your life,

Will you hold a child to your breast;

And a loving woman, and feel that you

Are away from the world—at rest.

And so I smile as you pass me by,

And oftentimes I sigh;

The smile I give to the days that are,

The sigh for those gone by.

CLIFFE COURT.

CHAPTER III.

UNDER ordinary conditions Arline Lester would have found life at the Chase a very pleasant and luxurious thing compared with the frugal economies she had always been forced to practice in her northern home; but unfortunately she was in a position to look under the surface, and her anxiety on Alicia's behalf grew deeper as she saw how little Sir Ascot Carlyon thought of or cared for the woman who bore his name.

They rarely met more than once a day at dinner, and not always then, for the Baronet had in a measure relapsed into his bachelor habits, and frequently spent the evening out, or entertained male friends at parties where a lady's presence would only have proved a restraint.

The one thing she had to care for, and which she clung to with a love that almost amounted to idolatry, was her baby. She would sit by his cradle watching him for hours together, and at night, instead of letting his nurse take him, she always insisted on having him with her. It seemed as if she feared to let him out of her sight for a moment longer than was absolutely necessary.

"What she would do if anything were to happen to him Heaven only knows!" Arline said to herself. "He has filled the place in her heart that should be her husband's, and that was Major Stuart's; but if he were taken from her, she would die, or go mad, or—something worse!"

And she was not far wrong in her surmise.

After that first night, when the barriers of her reserve had broken down under the influence of Arline's presence and sympathy she had carefully abstained from uttering a word of her private sorrows, and had even done her best to evince that, if not happy, she was at least content. In good truth, she had always tried her hardest to be a thoughtful and submissive wife, and leave no ground of

complaint for her husband, and so far she had succeeded—the time was swiftly approaching when she would find submission an impossibility.

She was sitting alone one morning at her desk when Sir Ascot joined her, and looked over her shoulder.

"Whom are you writing to?" he demanded, throwing himself into an armchair opposite.

"To Cliffe Court. We are invited to dine there next week."

"And you are accepting?"

"No! I intended saying we had a previous engagement. You told me to do so when I asked you about it yesterday morning."

"I remember, but I have altered my mind since then. I thought the Cliffes were alone, and, as you know, I'm not particularly fond of Master Hubert; but this morning I met him on horseback with the Countess de Roubaix, and—"

"You think her presence will make a difference?" Lady Carlyon added, smiling serenely as he paused.

"It is well calculated to, I should imagine, for she is very handsome, and from the few words I heard her say I fancy she is witty and entertaining. At all events, we will accept the invitation."

"I suppose," Alicia said, hesitating, "you would not care to go without me?"

"Why don't you want to come?"

"Because of Arline. You see, she is not invited, and she might think it unkind of me to leave her alone."

"Rubbish! She can't expect you to refuse your neighbour's hospitalities on her account? If she does the sooner she is undeceived the better. By-the-bye, Alicia, I have come to you on rather an unpleasant matter," he drew his chair up nearer, and looked round to see that the door was fastened. "I want you to write to Mr. Bayliss, and tell him to prepare a mortgage deed on part of these estates. The fact is, I have to raise some money, and as he is your trustee as well as your lawyer he will require an authority from you to enable him to go on with the matter."

Alicia, watching him very intently, fancied that under the apparent carelessness of his manner there was a certain restless anxiety; and little used to business as she was, it at once struck her this request of his must be of some importance.

"You want to raise money?" she echoed, in surprise. "Why, you got fifty thousand pounds last year through the sale of that farm that Custance bought, did you not?"

"What has that to do with it?" he retorted, irritably. "I have not sought an interview with you for the purpose of discussing what I did in the past, but to make arrangements for the future."

"I think you are very extravagant, Ascot; you cannot possibly have spent all that money in so short a time without gambling in some way or other, and that you promised you would abandon when I consented to the sale of the Glebe property. My income is, or was, a large one, and ought to be sufficient for our necessities without attacking the principal."

"You need not remind me of your wealth, and my own comparative poverty," he said, bitterly. "Our marriage was a fair exchange—I gave you a title in return for your riches."

Alicia was silent, keenly stung by the taunt, although it carried no truth with it.

"The mistake was that I ever consented to that precious marriage settlement of yours," he continued, with gloomy anger. "What does a woman know of money matters, and why should she have anything to do with them? If I had my way the whole feminine sex should be debarred from all such things. However, this is hardly to the point. The fact is: I want money, and money I must have."

"Ascot," said his wife, laying an earnest hand on his shoulder, "have you broken your word to me, and gone on with racing and betting?"

His eyes fell under her clear scrutiny, and he shook off the gentle touch.

"It by 'racing' you mean running a couple of horses I must plead guilty," he replied, with an uneasy laugh. "As to my promise, you must remember I was forced into it, so you can hardly wonder I should make a mental reservation. Listen to me, Alicia"—his tone changed; "I am in a dilemma, and help me out of it you must."

She did not reply, and he went on,—

"That fifty thousand pounds only just set me on my legs, did not by any means clear me, and so I resolved to make a venture at Newmarket, and if it had been successful I should have netted a pretty good sum; as it was, I lost through the d—d treachery of a jockey, and, of course, I found myself tenfold more involved than before—debts of honour, Alicia, which are bound to be paid, or I lose caste for ever. Now, I have another horse, which is *certain* to win the races for which I've entered him; but, in the meantime, what I owe must be settled, and the only way of managing it is a mortgage. I will pay it off directly I have the money, I give you my honour."

Alicia's lip curled rather contemptuously. Sir Ascot's "honour" when pledged to a woman was not a thing to trust to.

"You must let me think this over," she said, at length, in a low voice.

"It requires no thinking. The fact that I say I wish it should be enough for any dutiful wife."

"Have you aught to reproach me with in that particular, Ascot? Have I not done all in my power to leave you nothing to complain of?"

"I don't know—perhaps. I suppose we are much the same as other couples."

"I hope not—with all my heart, I hope not!" she exclaimed, involuntarily.

He looked at her and laughed.

"Well, be that as it may, you have now an opportunity of proving your obedience, and doing your duty."

"My duty is a divided one. I have to remember my boy," she said, gravely.

"And you place him before your husband. A model wife, indeed! You will make me wish he had never been born."

She grew very pale, and turned away, and Sir Ascot saw how great a mistake he had made.

"Come, come, Alicia!" he said, putting his hand on her arm. "I did not mean to offend you, but you must confess it is hard to see a baby preferred to me in everything."

"There is no one but me to think of him, you take no interest in his welfare."

"Nonsense! Every man must take an interest in his own child, particularly when that child happens to be his heir, so don't make a fool of yourself by saying unreasonable things. To come back to our starting point, will you write to Mr. Bayliss to-day and tell him to prepare the deed?"

"I will write to him," she answered, with an evasion he did not perceive.

"There's a good girl. Why the deuce could you not consent at first, without making all this fuss? Now can I do anything for you—would you like me to take you for a drive, or ride with you?"

"Neither, thank you. I am going for a walk with Arline, directly after luncheon."

"As you will," he said, preparing to leave.

"By-the-by," he added, turning round when he reached the door, "I met a friend of yours at the Molyneuxs last night—who do you think it was?"

"I don't know," apathetically.

"Guess!"

"How can I? My circle of acquaintances is a large one."

"I did not say acquaintances; the person I refer to was something more than that."

A deep flush coloured Alicia's face from the throat to brow at the significance of his tone, but she only looked at him inquiringly.

"I see you have an inkling of who I mean—Major Stuart, or rather, Colonel Stuart, for he has been promoted lately. He has altered

a good deal, looks a lot older than when I saw him last."

"Did you—did you speak to him?" she asked, her lips white and dry.

"I had no alternative, for Hubert Cliffe was with him, and we were brought face to face by Mrs. Molyneux. I suppose he and Cliffe are as great friends as ever—another Eneas and Achilles."

When she was alone, Alicia sat still on her chair, her hands clasped tightly together across her bosom. Her heart was beating so rapidly that she positively could not move, and recollections, which she had hitherto banished, came over her in a flood, almost frightening her by their vividness.

She had striven very hard, and, as she fancied, succeeded in rooting out her love for Basil Stuart, and, to the mere mention of his name, the thought of his being near, were sufficient to bring back all the old tenderness, even though she was the wife of another man, and the mother of his child!

She threw herself down on the couch, and hid her hot face in the cushions.

"I ought to die of shame!" she said to herself, with fierce self-reproach. "How can I ever hold up my head amongst honest women, if, being married, I allow this unholiness to have dominion over me? What can I do to kill it? What can I do—what can I do?"

CHAPTER IV.

CLIFFE COURT was a blaze of light from garret to basement, and an outsider, viewing it from a distance, might have fancied some gala was going on—the fact that Lord Cliffe was giving a dinner-party would hardly have seemed sufficient excuse for such an illumination.

In the large reception-room—commonly called the Blue Drawing-room—Hubert Cliffe and his uncle were waiting to receive their guests, both in evening dress, and both presenting a very satisfactory, although different, type of an English gentleman.

The room was large and lofty, with a painted ceiling, and a mantelpiece carved by the great Gibbon, the walls were panelled in white and gold, interspersed with mirrors that reached from floor to ceiling, and which reflected in endless vistas the dainty appointments and luxurious furniture. A great crystal chandelier hung in the centre, but instead of gas, was filled with wax candles, dozens of which also burned in sconces fixed in different parts of the room, and threw a soft, mellow light around.

"What's the matter, Hubert?" said Lord Cliffe, suddenly, observing a half-puzzled frown on his nephew's brow, "aren't all the arrangements to your satisfaction?"

"Yes, quite; only it just struck me that we might possibly be on the brink of an awkward *contretemps*. Yesterday I met Stuart, and asked him to come to-night, quite forgetting that we had already invited the Carlyons, and, unfortunately, he accepted."

"Why 'unfortunately'?"

"Well, he and Lady Carlyon were engaged once, you know, and I am not quite sure that a meeting would be pleasant to either of them."

"I don't think there is any cause to fear a scene," remarked Lord Cliffe, after a moment's thought. "Stuart is a man of the world—not at all given to wearing his heart on his sleeve, and Lady Carlyon herself is too perfectly well bred not to be entire mistress of her emotions."

"Oh! yes. I know that, but possibly they may both think I was to blame for subjecting them to the test, whereas the fact is I had really forgotten all about the matter when I spoke to Stuart."

"Better for her if she had married him instead of that scamp Carlyon—it's my opinion he is going to the dogs at the rate of an express train."

"I think so, too," responded Hubert, "and

I'm sorry for her sake—she is one of the most charming women I have ever met."

"As charming as Lady De Roubaix?" inquired his uncle, slyly.

"That's hardly a fair question; comparisons between the two are impossible," the young man answered, and as he spoke the door opened, and the lady in question came in.

A more radiant vision than Clarice, Countess De Roubaix, it is impossible to imagine. She was in the full maturity of her beauty, and all that art could do to render her loveliness more brilliant had been done.

She wore a dress of very delicate ivory satin, embroidered with iridescent beads, and trimmed with costly lace that fell in soft ruffles about her exquisite arms and bust; a large bouquet of dark crimson roses trailed across her corsage, and a single bud, nestling in green leaves, was pinned by a diamond arrow among the thick braids of her black hair—hair that rippled low down over a white forehead, and rendered the softness of her complexion all the more striking.

It was a peculiar complexion, such as is rarely seen in England—cream white, lighted up by a wonderful glow of carmine on the cheeks, and vivid scarlet lips, whose rich curves might, perhaps, have been a trifle too voluptuous to please some critics, but whose beauty it was impossible for the most captious to deny.

"Am I to play hostess on this festive occasion?" she asked, smiling, as she came and stood between the two gentlemen.

"Of course; who is there more fitting than yourself for the office?" demanded Lord Cliffe, taking her hand and raising it to his lips.

She had already completely fascinated him by her beauty, as well as by the pains she had been at to secure his admiration.

"Certainly, I am pretty well used to the task, but you must remember I don't know any of the county celebrities I am to meet to-night—they will be all strangers."

"You should congratulate yourself then, inasmuch as you find another world to conquer," rejoined the Viscount, gallantly.

She swept him a pretty curtsy.

"What a courtly flatterer you are, Uncle Everard! You would make me believe I was still in France if your appearance were not so very unlike a Gaul's. By-the-by—turning to Hubert—"what do you think of my dress? I got it direct from Paris."

"He hasn't had time to think of the dress yet," interposed Lord Cliffe. "His eyes have not strayed beyond the face of the wearer, as I can bear witness."

"Why don't you allow him to speak for himself—can't he be capable of doing it?" asked the Countess, letting her full, dark eyes rest on the young man.

"My uncle doesn't give me a chance," laughed Hubert. "However, as he has expressed my feelings of admiration so prettily I can hardly quarrel with him for taking the words out of my mouth."

"But were they your feelings?" she said, in a low voice, as Lord Cliffe left them, and opened one of the windows to look out.

"Certainly, you surely cannot think me so unappreciative as to doubt it."

"I don't know. You are rather difficult to please, I fancy."

"Am I? If that is the case then I pay you a compliment all the higher by my admiration. Your bracelet is unclamped. May I fasten it for you?"

She extended her arm—a round, beautifully-moulded arm—with skin as smooth as satin and fair as ivory, and after Hubert had captured the glittering ruby band that encircled it he can hardly be blamed for pressing his lips to the pretty wrist.

"Cousin's privileges," he said, in excuse.

"Will you forgive me for claiming them?"

"It is the first time you have attempted to do so," she answered, with a coquettish smile, in which there was certainly no anger.

Later on she proved herself an ideal hostess

receiving the guests with as perfect an ease as if she had known them all her life, and never at a loss for a few gracious word of welcome or a sparkling repartee.

Sir Ascot Carlyon contrived to remain near her, his wife preferred sitting near one of the open windows, where Hubert presently made his way, and began talking.

"I did not wish you good-bye the other day when I saw you at the station," he said. "After I had met my cousin I looked round, but you had disappeared."

"I think I rather hurried away on account of Miss Lester, who was tired."

"Then she did come?"

"Oh! yes."

"And is with you still?"

"Yes, but she is getting anxious to 'earn her own living,' as she calls it, and has made me promise to look out and find her a situation. I suppose you can't help me in procuring anything suitable?"

"I'm afraid not, unless," laughing, "she would like to come and be our housekeeper."

"But you have one already. Mrs. Belton has not left, has she?"

"No, but she fell down some steps the other day and injured her knee-cap, and the doctor says she won't be able to get about again for a long time; so, in the meanwhile, we must find a substitute. Of course, we won't hear of her going away, and the poor old lady is in great trouble for fear we should suffer inconvenience through her illness."

Something in Lady Carlyon's face made him stop, and, glancing round, he saw that a tall, military-looking man, with brown eyes and a bronze skin, had entered the room, and was being presented to Lady de Roubaix.

"Ah! there is Stuart," he observed, carefully abstaining from meeting her eyes. "I must go and speak to him if you will excuse me."

Alicia did not answer, but made a slight affirmative motion of the head, and then looked round the room, fearful in her consciousness that every eye was on her. As it happened, however, no one was even glancing in her direction, and Colonel Stuart was still engaged in exchanging greetings with his beautiful hostess, so she had time to notice him and to recover her own self-possession.

How stern he looked, and how much older! And there was a scar on one cheek that had somewhat marred his beauty, but not in her eyes. To her he still seemed as he had ever done, handsomest and noblest among men.

Hubert Cliffe, anxious to do all in his power to make things as easy as possible for both, and thinking that a pointed avoidance of each other would be more calculated to be noticed than anything else, brought the soldier to Lady Carlyon's side.

"Here is a friend you have not seen for some time," he said, and then turned away, leaving them comparatively alone, for they were far enough off from the general group to be out of earshot.

Colonel Stuart bowed, and seemed on the point of retiring, but Alicia put out a little tremulous hand, which he could not affect to ignore without the most absolute rudeness.

"Have you been in England long?" she said, her voice not quite as steady as it might have been.

"Only a few weeks."

"And—do you intend staying here altogether now?"

"Certainly not. I shall rejoin my regiment as soon as my leave of absence has expired—perhaps before."

His voice was cold as ice, and expressed the most absolute indifference; his manner, strictly courteous as it was, could not possibly have been more frigidly repellent. And yet, all the while he was looking at her and thinking what a sweet and innocent face it was, how well it cloaked the hypocrisy of which he had had such painful experience in the past! His glance wandered downwards to the slim fingers lying on her lap, destitute of rings, save that one broad band, which was

rendered more conspicuous by their absence; and she, with a hasty movement that was perfectly involuntary, dropped her right hand upon it as if to hide it. He made no remark, and just then Hubert came up again, and offered his arm.

"Permit me to take you to dinner, Lady Carlyon. Stuart, will you bring Miss Molyneux in?"

Lord Cliffe was celebrated for his dinner-parties; his chef was unapproachable, his wines were those of a connoisseur, and his taste had passed into a proverb. The tables, with their snowy damask, on which was woven his own coat-of-arms, the massive silver ewer and tureen filled with choicest flowers, the coloured lamps, which threw a soft ray of light over it all, made a picture by itself; and certainly the guests that gathered round it were a representative assembly of the wealth, rank and beauty of the county. Amongst them all Lady de Roubaix shone pre-eminent, not alone through her loveliness, for her ready wit, her silver laughter, her sweet full tones, and her unflinching brightness were as charming as her appearance.

It was curious to see how these languished directly she left the table, and adjourned with the other ladies to the drawing-room.

She seated herself on a couch, in an attitude whose grace seemed less natural than the result of careful study, and began languidly fanning herself with a huge fan of marabout feathers, leaving her guests to amuse themselves as best they might. Lady Carlyon happened to be near her, and to her she addressed a careless remark.

"Gentlemen stay a long time over their wine, in England, do they not?"

"Sometimes, not always."

"It is so long since I have been at a dinner-party in my native land that I almost forget the British customs," she went on.

"You have lived in Paris, have you not?"

"Partly, and partly in my late husband's chateau in Normandy. I was married when I was very young—a child, in fact."

"And do you purpose returning to France?"

"No," very promptly. "I infinitely prefer England, and I intend remaining here. I cannot imagine a more delightful place to stay at than this—Cliffe Court."

"It is very charming," Alicia assented, vaguely, and then relapsed into a silence that was unbroken until the gentlemen came in, not having on this occasion lingered long over their wine.

Lady de Roubaix brightened up at once, and on being asked to sing, went immediately to the piano, and gave an operatic aria that displayed her fine voice and florid execution admirably.

"Cliffe was always celebrated for night-gales," observed Sir Ascot, who had placed himself at her side, "but I have certainly never heard so sweet a one before."

"I didn't know there were any here," said Miss Molyneux, a young lady of a certain age, who had overheard the remark. "I wonder if there are any singing now?" she added, to Hubert Cliffe.

"Probably there are—would you like to hear them?"

"Very much."

He went to one of the windows, and, drawing back the surrounding lace and satin draperies, threw it open, and let in a flood of moonlight.

"What an exquisite night!" exclaimed Lady de Roubaix, who had followed him. "It is really a sin to be indoors."

"Then absolve yourself from the sin without delay," said Sir Ascot, offering his arm, which she took, and they both stepped out on the marble terrace, an example followed by most of the others.

Lady Carlyon was glad to have the chance of being alone for a few minutes, and seated herself on a rustic bench, under the shadow of a copper beech, while the rest dispersed about the grounds in knots of twos and threes.

Before she had been there long the scent of cigar smoke announced someone approaching,

and a minute later Colonel Stuart passed, but drew himself up short as he perceived the figure under the trees, which he did not at first recognise.

"Lady Carlyon!" he said, as she made a slight movement.

"Yes, it is I."

He would have passed on, but she prevented him. Knowing what she knew, it was maddening he should treat her thus; and though she was conscious that if she had been wise she would have acquiesced in the line of conduct he had seen fit to adopt, and would have permitted him to treat her as a stranger, the intense human longing to hear him speak one kind word was too great to be resisted, and she put forth her hand almost as if she would have laid it on his sleeve.

"You are determined to ignore your old friends, Colonel Stuart?" she said, with the ghost of a smile that was infinitely sadder than tears.

He flung away his cigar before answering. "You are the first person who has ever accused me of fickleness."

"Am I? Perhaps I am the only one who has ever had cause for complaint, and yet we—were friends once."

"Friends!" he echoed, his voice for the first time losing its inflexibility.

"And," she continued, rapidly, "I have not so many that I can afford to let one go. It pains me to know you think hardly of me."

"Does it?" he said, slowly, while his eye lighted up with bitterest scorn. "I do not like being rude to a woman, but you must pardon me if I venture to doubt your word, Lady Carlyon."

There was a moment's silence, and she looked helplessly away from him across the moonlit lawn to where a fountain was playing, and making a gentle little rippling murmur as it flashed in its marble basin.

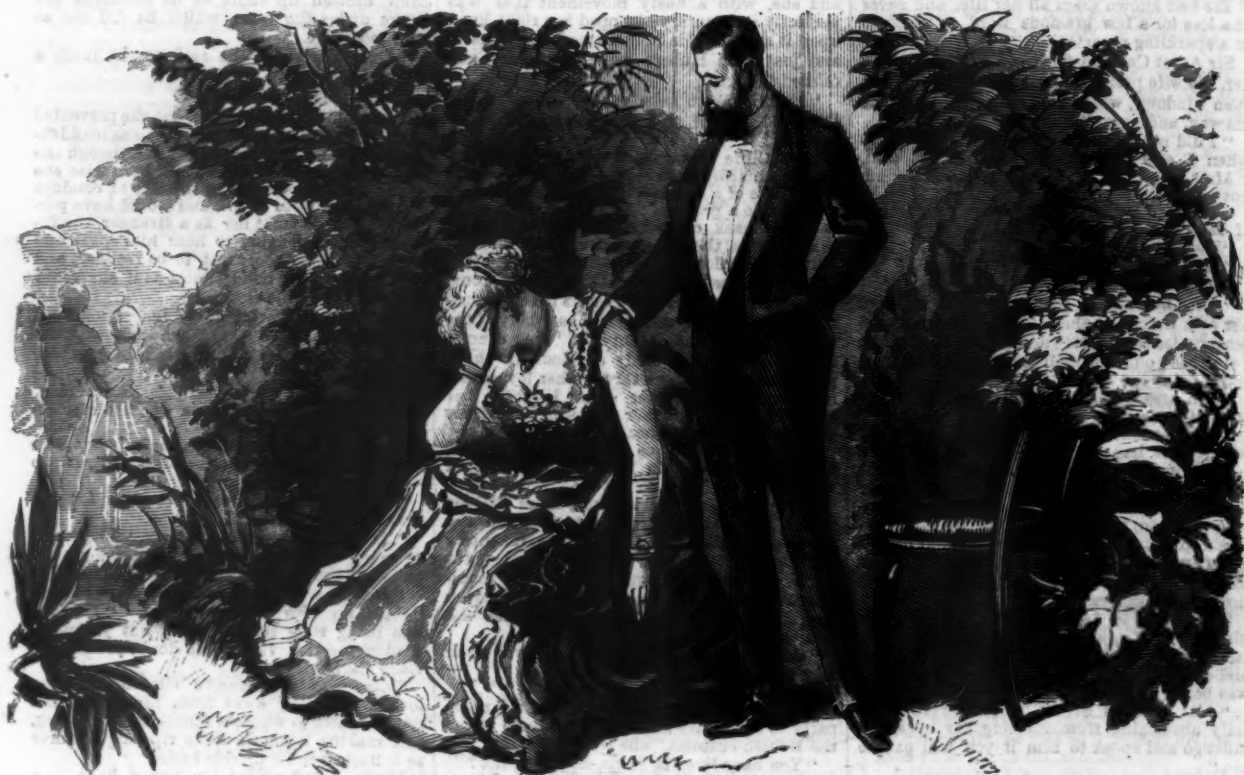
If the influences of the scene have any power, then the hearts of both these two should have been softened, for one more calculated to recall tender recollections it would be impossible to imagine. The entrancing spell of a midsummer night was in the air, and from the dew-drenched roses and mignonette there floated up subtle perfumes, while indoors someone of the party, who presumably feared catching cold, was at the piano, from which strains of melody issued that, softened by distance, mingled harmoniously with the low whispering of the leaves, and the murmur of falling water. Over all the white alchemy of the moonlight fell, clothing everyday things with a new and wonderful beauty.

"Friendship between you and me is an impossibility," Colonel Stuart went on, coming a step nearer, and looking down at her with eyes of pitiless contempt. "Friendship argues esteem, and it is very unlikely I should cherish such a sentiment towards one who has deceived me as you have."

She had no longer reason to complain of his apathy—the stern restraint he had set upon himself her own words had broken through, and now it almost seemed as if they had changed places, for of the two she was certainly the calmer.

Perhaps she had done wrong in speaking as she did, in the first instance; perhaps she ought to have gone away now that she saw he was no longer master of his words—but to do this would have required a strong will, and firmness of purpose that she did not possess. She was no heroine, this poor Alicia, no sublimated being above the frailties of humanity, but only a most miserable woman, liable to err, like the rest of us—sweet, tender, capable of endurance for the sake of those she loved, and sharing all the weakness of womanhood.

"Is it out of sheer vanity or love of acting a falsehood that you speak to me thus, and talk about friendship?" he went on, his tone one of low, concentrated passion. "Are you not satisfied with having spoilt my life and destroyed all the faith I once had in your sex? What more do you want?"



["ALICIA," HE SAID, "TELL ME ONE THING; WHY DID YOU LEAVE MY LETTERS UNANSWERED?"]

"Hav I, ndeed, spoilt your life?" she said, very painfully, although, strange contradiction!—at the self-same moment a thrill of deep, but instantly suppressed exultation ran through her veins at the thought of his love having been so strong. "I am grieved—most grieved."

He looked at her in silence—a frail shadowy figure in the moonlight, with the sweetest and truest of gray eyes—eyes that looked as if their clear depths had never known shadow of guile.

"What sphynx was ever half so difficult of comprehension as a woman!" he muttered, under his breath. "I cannot understand the mystery—I suppose I never shall."

He came close to her, and laid a heavy hand on her shoulder.

"Alicia!" he said, "tell me one thing. Heaven only knows whether I have a right to ask it! Why did you leave my letters unanswered?"

She made no reply, but he could feel her form vibrating under his touch.

"Was it," he continued, after a moment's pause, "because you found you loved Sir Ascot Carlyon better than me, and you were not brave enough to encounter my anger at your fickleness? Better you had done so—far better than the miserable suspense I endured until I saw your marriage chronicled in the paper. Oh, Heaven! even now I cannot bear to look back upon it!"

The last words ended in a whisper, and his hand fell heavily from her arm. She turned and clasped it with her slim fingers.

"Don't think so harshly of me, Basil—judge me as leniently as you can. I dare not explain all, but, indeed, I am not to blame, as you suppose."

"Not to blame!" he repeated, shaking off her touch. "Not to blame, when you went on deceiving me—when the very last time I saw you, you lay in my arms in the starshine, and said you loved me better than anything in the wide world, and that nothing, save death

itself, would shake your constancy! It was the foulest lie that ever stained a woman's lips!"

"It was not!" she cried, stung beyond all endurance by her anguish. "It was true as Heaven's own truth—it is true still!"

There was that in her voice which vouched for what she said, and his heart gave a great wild bound as he heard it. Her face was deadly pale—as white as the lilies Arline had placed in the bosom of her black lace dress; but in her deep eyes glowed the same terrible anguish her voice expressed, and which admitted but of one interpretation.

He waited a moment, while she sank down on the chair from which she had risen in her excitement, and buried her face in her hands. From a distance came the echoes of merry laughter; Hubert and his guests had wandered off into the plantation, and, tempted by the beauty of the night, were in no hurry to exchange it for the drawing-room; but there was no one near enough to see or hear the two beneath the copper beech—practically they were as utterly alone as if they had been in a room with closed doors.

"It seems to me you have either said too much or too little," Colonel Stuart added; "enough to rouse my suspicion that treachery has been at work, and not enough to satisfy them. Besides, you have not answered my question. You have not told me why you did not answer my letters?"

"Because I never had them!" she answered, in desperation. "Now are you satisfied—now do you see why your condemnation is unjust? I have said more than I had any right to say, but you have forced me to it by your hardness—"

He interrupted her with scant ceremony. "Then it was not for love you married Sir Ascot?"

"No."

"Nor for the sake of his title?"

"A thousand times, no!"

"I begin to're it all now," he said, drawing

a deep breath, while his thoughts took a retrospective sweep over the past, and Alicia once more appeared before his eyes as he saw her then—a sweet, innocent, trustful girl, who had plighted him her troth in spite of the opposition of her ambitious mother. He had loved her with all the strength of his nature—had woven round her all his tenderest fancies, had endowed her with all beautiful womanly attributes, and his disappointment when she wedded Sir Ascot Carlyon had been such as it falls to few men's lot to suffer. As the years went by he fancied he had become cold and hardened, and that his heart was steeled against all the siren fascination a woman could exercise. He had even courted a meeting with his former love, in order to prove that Alicia Howard no longer existed in Alicia, Lady Carlyon, and—this was the result!

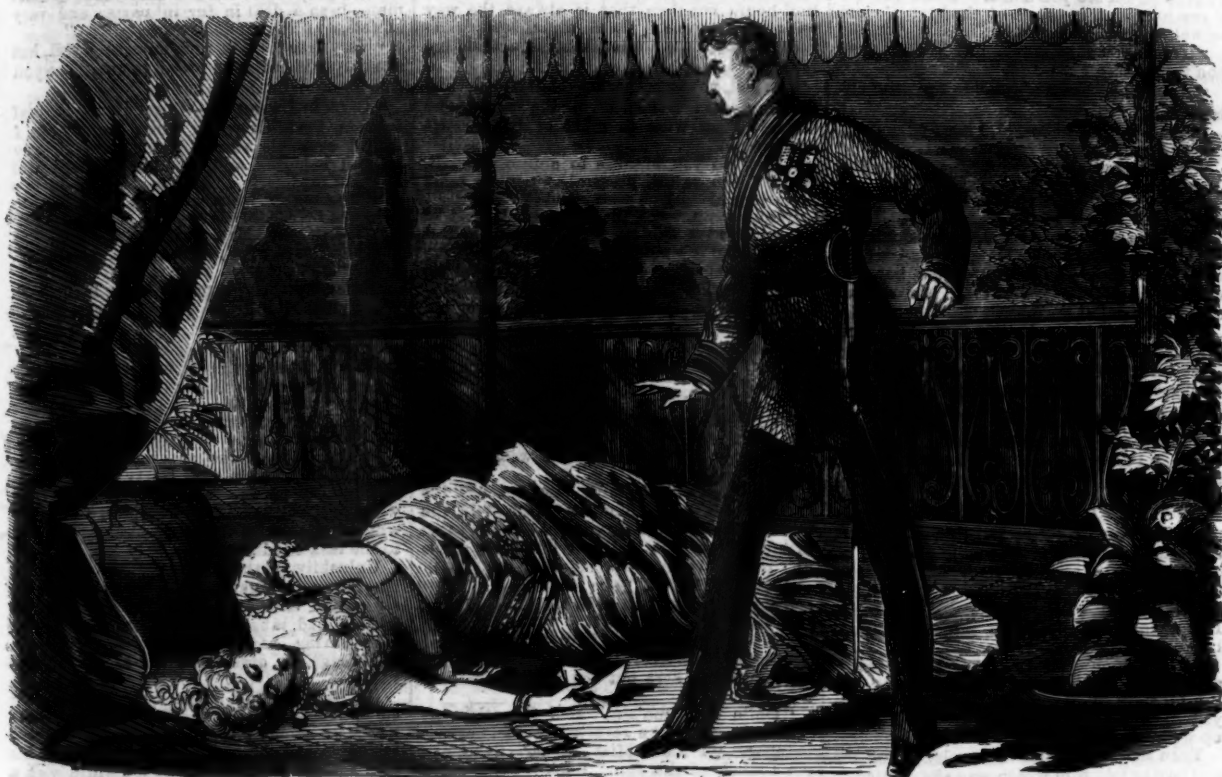
Instead of a heartless coquette, triumphant in her beauty, and her position as the wife of a man of high rank and noble name, there sat before him a humbled, crushed creature, clothed with all her old gentleness, and with a ring in her voice whose meanings he recognized only too well.

There was no need for him to ask, or for her to give further explanation. It seemed to him he understood everything, and he cursed his own blind folly for condemning her, and for believing the letter her mother wrote, sending him back his ring, and telling him that her daughter no longer cared for him. Of that he could not speak, for the hands that had traced those lines were now held tight in death's cold embrace, and his lips were sealed from uttering reproaches against her.

"I see it all now—my poor Alicia!" he said; "and it is a thousandfold worse than I thought it. I don't know which to pity most—you or myself!"

For the knowledge had come to him that not one life, but two, had been ruined by that mysterious fate against whose decrees we have no power to wrestle.

(To be continued.)



["YOU MIGHT HAVE BEEN HONEST WITH ME, MABEL," WAS ALL HE SAID, AS SHE SUNK FAINTING AT HIS FEET.]

NOVELETTE.]

SYBIL'S MISTAKE.

CHAPTER I.

"BACK, Jack—back! Down, Die, will you! Confound the dogs, what's the matter with them?"

The speaker vaulted the low stile as he spoke, and there in front of him lay the cause of the rebellion—a figure in a white cotton dress, stretched below the hedge a little to one side of the unfrequented road by which he had come. Had he been much accustomed to the ways of women he might at once have understood that something was amiss. As it was he merely raised his hat, and said,—

"I beg your pardon, ma'am, I hope my dogs have not inconvenienced you?"

No answer.

"The old lady's very deaf," he muttered to himself; though why he should have at once concluded that she was old it would be hard to say. "I'll try a little shouting." Here he put his right hand up to his mouth. "I ho-o-ope my-y-daws—why hang it there's something wrong. Good heavens, the woman's dead!" he added, as with a bound forward he reached the prostrate form, and bent over it. No! she was not dead, but her breath came thick and slow, and the face had a ghostly paleness which frightened him nearly as much as if she had been really so.

"I wonder what's the matter?" he said; "never saw anything like it. If we were in Benares again, I should say heat-apoplexy, but that does not grow in England. I should think water would be a good thing, anyhow."

As he spoke he cast his eye round the meadow, and soon noticed a little brook gurgling faintly along the far side. With characteristic impetuosity he darted off to fetch some water. When he got to the brook, however, he recollected that he had nothing in which to carry it. Then he bethought him of his hat ("Jack would have remembered that in half the

time," was his mental comment), and filling it with water he hastened to make his way back to the stile.

Now, Jack and Die, the two dogs, had a very distinct idea that when their master carried anything carefully out of their reach he did so because he intended eventually to throw it in any given direction for their especial behoof; and the more he tried to prevent their getting at the hat, and told them to get out of the way, the more certain they became that he was doing so for their eventual good. So it happened that this unfortunate young man (for he was young) had his thoughts pretty well occupied as he hurried across the field. Nor did he look up at all until he had nearly reached his goal, and when he did so, he nearly dropped the water he had taken such a lot of trouble to carry, for this is what he saw.

The late recumbent figure was sitting up against the bank watching him with just the suspicion of a smile curling round the pale lips. The face was not a very pretty one, but still it could not be called plain. Dark blue eyes, fringed with dark eyelashes, a slightly irregular nose, a small mouth, the face a trifle too oval, perhaps, the cheeks just beginning to show the faintest tinge of colour, all surmounted by a crown of glorious golden hair. The toilet, a simple cotton gown and a broad-brimmed hat. Nothing out of the way, perhaps, but sufficient to cause our unsophisticated friend to exclaim,—

"A pretty girl, by Jove!"

There was no mistaking the blush now, and getting more than ever out of his depth he, too, began to redder, and at last blurted out,—

"Try a little water, won't you?"

Luckily this was too much for the other, and she laughed merrily. Not thinking it polite to differ, he, too, began to laugh, and the dogs catching the infection, yelped and jumped about the pair, as the best way available of testifying that they, too, were pleased. Presently, however, order was restored.

"No, thank you," said the girl, still hardly

able to restrain her merriment, "and—don't you think you'll get sunstroke, if you remain much longer without a hat?"

"By Jove, I forgot all about it. I had a touch of it once, you know," getting confidential, "in this way. The regiment was at Dum-Dum, and Jack and I had got ten days' leave for shooting."

"Forgive my interrupting you," said the girl, "but you are still forgetting all about your hat."

"So I am—very stupid of me," and without any further hesitation he turned the hat (water and all) on to his head. Luckily most of the contents had leaked out, but there was enough left to make a very uncomfortable shower bath in miniature.

"A very awkward fellow," thought his companion, but she did not say so. Then aloud, "Did you bring the water for me?"

"Yes," he answered, more ill at ease than ever, for there was a gentle trickle down his neck from the wet hat. "The truth of the matter is, I was rather frightened when I saw you. I saw that you had gone off, somehow, and in such cases water is generally a good thing, at least so our own doctor used to tell me. You see, when the regiment was quartered at Benares, we had a great many cases of heat-apoplexy, and the Colonel—but I beg your pardon, I don't suppose you were ever in India, were you?"

"No, never," was the answer.

"By Jove!" he cried, going off again at a tangent. "Just like me; I never asked how you felt now."

"I have been ill lately," she answered, with a smile, "and I have stupidly walked too far from home in the heat."

"And it is fairly hot too," he broke in. "Yet I remember in 187—, in Benares."

"This young man has only one idea," thought his companion, as he rattled on; and then she said aloud, "excuse my interrupting you, but I must be getting home."

"All right," was the ready answer. "If you

want to go I'll see you home. Don't you see if you had another touch of the heat it's just as well to have an escort."

"Thank you very much, but I won't give you the trouble."

"No trouble, I assure you," in the most off-hand way.

"And I was about to add, I can find my way home alone."

"No use your objecting; don't you see you fainted, therefore you're the patient. I fetched water, therefore I'm the doctor, all regular. Allow me," and he assisted her to rise.

The exertion was evidently too much for the girl. She turned pale again and would have fallen, if he had not supported her. It was only momentary, however, and she recovered herself at once.

"You had better take my arm, don't you think?" he said, thinking to himself at the same time, "a fine sort of Darcy and Joan business this for me to find myself at again. Upon my word, one runs up against young women everywhere."

"Thank you," she said, with a slight hesitation. "I am very sorry to give you so much trouble, but I really think, if you don't mind—"

"Not in the least," and he offered her his arm, and started off at the rate of a good three-and-a-half miles an hour.

"I am really afraid I can't walk quite so fast," gasped the invalid.

"Oh, hang it—I beg your pardon—I mean I'm awfully sorry, I quite forgot," and he began to go at a snail's pace.

"I can manage a little faster than this," said his companion, patiently.

"All right, then you set the pace—I mean you walk just as fast as you like, and I'll keep up with you."

Then they both burst out laughing, and the girl having told him which way she wanted to go they set out together.

Little by little the shyness wore off, and they soon found themselves chatting away pleasantly.

"You are a stranger here?" she said, as he took the fourth wrong turn, "or you would know this path."

"Yes, the fact is, I only came here yesterday week. I got tired of town, and came here to see if I could get a little fishing."

"Oh, it is you who have taken Farmer Jackson's fishing?" she said, betraying at once that she knew something about his movements.

"Yes I have, but I have not made altogether a good thing of it. Mrs. Jackson objected to my smoking in her best parlour, and I said if that was the case that I'd move; so I have gone to Mrs. Prince's."

"Oh! the lodgings at the post-office?"

"Yes, and very quaint sort of diggings they are too, I can tell you."

"Digging!" with a puzzled look.

"Oh, I forgot—lodgings I meant to say. There is not a room that I can stand bolt upright in in the whole house, upon my word."

"I wonder you came here at all. Highbury is a very quiet place."

"Very," was the answer, "and that's its great attraction. You see town is quite too much for me. All the old dowagers—I mean I don't care for so much gaiety," he added, in some confusion.

"Certainly I can congratulate you on your choice; this is about the dullest place in England."

"I know it," he said, with a chuckle. "A friend of mine, a lawyer, found it out for me. He told me there was only one squire within ten miles; a pompous old gentleman with some daughters—he never noticed his companion's confusion, but went on quite unobservedly."

"The daughters were rather a drawback; but as Jack assured me that the last thing the old fellow would do would be to ask me to his house I jumped at the place, and here I am."

He rattled away as if he was talking to his friend Jack instead of to a young lady he had

seen for the first time in the course of the last half-hour; but then that is always the way with shy people. Once their reserve is broken down they often become a trifle too familiar.

The girl, however, hardly understood this. She had seen but little of the world, and scarcely knew what to make of her strange companion.

"How do you manage to amuse yourself, then?" she asked, presently. "Time must hang very heavily on your hands."

"Not at all," was the answer. "First of all, there is the fishing, which, though it does not come up to the advertisements is still very fair; then there is the village gossip, which one must get on fast to; and then, of an evening, there is generally some cricket going on, and so altogether I manage to get on pretty well."

"Yes," she said, "if you don't care for society."

"Society! Bless you, there is the Labourers' Club meets every evening in the parlour of the 'Fox and Grapes.' I've learnt more about English politics this last week than I knew in all my life before."

As he finished speaking they reached the end of the lane, and found themselves in the main street of the little village. At the same instant a carriage and pair of ponies drove up; its only occupant an elderly lady.

"My dear Sybil," she exclaimed, "how could you be so foolish as to walk so far? And how pale you are looking!"

"Yes, it was stupid. Aunt Jane," said Sybil, "and, indeed, I fainted, and should never have got here but for this gentleman's assistance."

"Quite true, ma'am," said the other, as almost instantly he reverted to his nervous manner. "I found Miss—or—Sybil had got a touch of the sun. Luckily, she came round all right, so I gave her my arm, and here we are. As you say, however, she should be careful. I remember once at Benares—"

"Much obliged to you, I'm sure, sir, for your trouble," interrupted Aunt Jane. "Now, Sybil, my dear, if you are ready," and before the stranger could offer his assistance the groom had helped the young lady into the carriage, and he had only just time to lift his hat, as the ponies started off at a fast trot down the road.

As he did so he just got a glimpse of a little face under a big hat, the shadow of which hardly allowed him to decide whether the expression meant amusement or displeasure.

"Sybil's a pretty name," he thought, as he replaced his hat.

He walked a few yards up the street, and turned into a small garden with a snug little cottage at the end of it. A notice over the gate was to the effect that this was the post-office.

"Good evening, Mrs. Prince," he said, as he entered the office. "Any letters for me?"

"None this evening, sir," was the answer.

"When would you like tea?"

"Oh, in half-an-hour's time or so will do," he replied. "By-the-bye, who drives a pair of white ponies?"

"Lor, sir, that's the Squire's carriage. Miss Sybil or one of the ladies drives down here 'most every day."

"And I called her father pompous, and said he was sure not to invite anybody to the Hall," said the stranger to himself, as he reached his own room, and filled a huge meerschaum pipe.

Meanwhile, the pony-carriage, having got as far as Aunt Jane wished to go, had turned back.

"Auntie, dear," said Sybil, as they reached the village. "would you mind stopping at the post-office? I want to get some stamps."

The carriage stopped as desired, and Miss Sybil entered the shop, and asked for what she wanted.

"You've got a lodger now, Mrs. Prince, I hear?" she said, as that good woman was engaged in making up her packet.

"Oh, yes, miss; such a nice young gentleman—been a deal in furrin' parts; and very affable, so pleasant and free to talk to."

"Very free to talk to," thought Sybil, but she only said, "I'm very glad to hear that you like him. What is his name?"

"Captain Lane, miss—Roger Lane. A real captain, too! One day when he was out I looked over his things just to see if any wanted mending, and found a whole boxful of them medals, just like the one Mrs. Jones's son Thomas got when he went to Afrikay to fight the blacks."

"Thank you, Mrs. Prince. A shilling, I believe?" said Sybil, as she took her stamps, and left the shop.

So far as the occupant of the little back parlour at Mrs. Prince's knew there was no such person in the world as Roger Lane; not that the worthy postmistress had wilfully tried to deceive Miss Sybil, for all the Captain's letters had come to him in that name, and as such he was known in the village. One letter made all the difference. Vane, not Lane, was the stranger's name.

At the time of the opening of this story Roger Vane was close on thirty years of age. His mother he had never known, she died when he was born. His father, left a widower while still a young man, had devoted himself to the task of educating his only son.

Unluckily, perhaps, for the young Roger, his father had never been able to bear the separation entailed by a public school, and he himself had taught him what he knew, and, with loving care, had retained forgotten knowledge, in order that his boy might not suffer.

Hence Roger had, perhaps, received a better education than the majority of boys, but he had also suffered a great disadvantage in never having mixed on equal terms with those of his own age. And so he entered the world with a shy, retiring disposition, which not even the rough-and-tumble of military life had been able to shake off.

The elder Vane had acted wisely in one respect, viz., after setting before his son, to the best of his ability, the advantages and disadvantages of the various careers which it was open to him to adopt, he had left him to choose his own. And the boy, full of stories of the Crimean War and the Mutiny, had chosen the army.

His father's income, though small, was sufficient to enable him to enter the infantry, and in due course Roger Vane went to Sandhurst.

When nearing the end of his time there a great grief befel him in the death of his father from heart disease.

He was engaged in writing down some hints for his son's guidance in the career he had chosen, and was found by his housekeeper lying dead over his writing-table.

Great as the shock of his father's death was to the young soldier, he had little time to brood over it.

One of those little wars, which are always taking place in some corner or other of our extended empire, was just beginning, and his guardian, a distinguished general officer—who had been in the same regiment as Roger's grandfather, and who had been chosen by his father in view of the career he had chosen—succeeded in getting him appointed to one of the regiments detailed to proceed to the seat of war.

In spite of his home bringing-up, young Vane was no milksop, and before the war was over he had not only earned the approval of his commanding officer by his steadiness and pluck, but he had also gained the coveted distinction of the Victoria Cross.

At the end of the war his regiment was ordered to India, and there the name he had gained for soldierly qualities so far stood him in good stead that he was more than once given employment on the frontier, and before he had reached his five-and-twentieth year he was marked down as a rising man.

On one point, however, he had remained

firm. He would never, in times of peace, take any employment on the personal staff, although the post of aide-de-camp had been several times offered to him.

One great reason for this was that he did not care for society; his bringing-up had been quiet, and although a keen sportsman and good rider, he preferred the society of his books to any other, not that he was by any means at a loss in society; simply he did not care for it, and as he was of a very independent character he followed his own wishes, and refused to go out more than he cared.

With the ladies of his regiment he was on intimate terms, and, as a rule, was very well liked by them and by his brother officers.

About two years before the commencement of this story he had been engaged with his regiment in a frontier war. Besides his own another British regiment was engaged, one of those crack corps which, in default of the Guards, are much affected by the younger sons of great families. A very difficult piece of work, the storming of a stockade, had to be done, and as it was a service of particular danger the General decided that it should be performed by volunteers, though at Vane's request he particularly detailed him to lead the party. One other officer was allowed to accompany him, and he was chosen from the other regiment.

He was a very young ensign—a handsome fellow, and full of pluck. As the two led their men up the slope he got slightly in advance of Roger, and jumped first into the stockade, only to fall pierced by a dozen bullets. The discharge of so many bullets, however, stood the rest in good stead, for in the confusion Vane's party put the defenders to the bayonet, and occupied the work. Having seen to the safety of the party, and sent word that the place was taken, he returned to the spot where the young officer was lying, and found a party of his regiment there gathered round the body, for the gallant lad had received no less than three mortal wounds, and must have died instantaneously.

"What was his name, sergeant?" he asked.

"Mr. Vane, sir," was the answer.

Curious, thought Roger. Wonder if he's any relation?

Reflections, however, were soon cut short by the approach of the main body, and the unfortunate officer's body was carried away by his own regiment. Occupied with the details of his own duties, Roger soon forgot all about the circumstances, and in the excitement of the campaign never had time to recollect the past.

Six months later, after the conclusion of the campaign, he took leave to Kashmir. One evening, when he was sitting in front of his camp fire after dinner, his coolie postman came in from Srinagur, the capital, and brought him two letters. The first was an official from the Horse Guards, notifying his promotion to a company in his own regiment. The other, which was from the great legal firm of Lorrie and Lorrie, nearly stunned him. It told him, in brief, that owing to the death of the late Harry Vane, Esq., at the storming of the K— Fort, he had become heir to the Vane baronetcy, with estates of a rental of a clear thirty thousand a year, and that the late baronet, Sir Stephen, had died of a broken heart on hearing of the death of his last surviving male relative, in the firm belief that his family was extinct. The lawyers, however, had determined to be careful before they allowed the estates to go to the only surviving relative of Sir Stephen—his niece, a Mrs. St. John; and in the course of a six-months' inquiry they had found that Sir Stephen's grandfather had an only brother, whose representative was Roger Vane, Esq., of the—th Foot.

The letter enclosed another written in a female hand. It was from Mrs. St. John, and ran as follows. To Roger it seemed funny to be addressed for the first time by his new title.

Mr. DAVID ST. JOHN. Will you forgive me if I assume a cousin's privilege, and write to

congratulate you on your accession to the title? You and I are, I believe, the last representatives of the House of Vane, and though I should dearly love to have become the chateleine of Danebury Castle, where I was born, and lived so long with my poor uncle, Sir Stephen, I cannot help feeling glad that the Vane Baronetcy has not expired. All our hopes are in you now, for Mr. Lorrie tells me that you are positively the only male representative of the name. I hope when you come home (as I suppose you will shortly) that you will come and visit us. My husband joins me in kindest regards—Believe me, my dearest Sir Roger, your affectionate cousin,

"MARTHA ST. JOHN."

"Very civil," said Roger, to himself. He did not know then that worthy Mrs. St. John had a daughter, whom she greatly hoped to see mistress of Danebury.

Sir Roger did not, however, go home just then. He wanted things to settle before he appeared on the scene. So he wrote to Mrs. St. John, promising to visit her when he came home, and to Messrs. Lorrie, asking them to manage his affairs. And next day he bagged a fine fiver, and thought no more about it. His troubles were all to come.

Jerry Vane, of the—th, was, as he found only too soon, a very different person from Captain Sir Roger Vane, Bart., V.C., for now that he was a great man they raked up all his services, and found out suddenly that he was a very distinguished officer.

Half the married generals in India, and most of the biggest civilians, scraped an acquaintance with him, and offered him the post of A.D.C. However, he refused them all impartially.

Only on one point he was beaten. The perfect hail of invitations that showered in upon him so worried him that he got tired of refusing them, and one very matchmaking lady with three elderly daughters fairly outmanoeuvred him, and got him to accept an invitation to dinner. This opened the floodgates again, and he had no peace.

"Look here, Jack," he said, one evening, entering his chum's room, "here's old Hunter of the Bengal Cavalry, and an old bachelor, actually asking me to dine at his bungalow on Friday. Why can't he ask me to mess like a Christian? One's sure of a rubber at whist there, at all events."

"Haven't you heard?" answered Jack Bramston. "I thought everybody knew the great news?"

"What news?"

"Why, that old Hunter has produced a daughter from somewhere, and, what's more, a very pretty one."

"Has he! Well, look here, Jack, I've had enough of this. I apply for leave to Europe to-morrow."

But he did not. He went, saw, and was conquered. Three days afterwards Jack pronounced his opinion that old Jerry was hard hit, and in three weeks' time it was all over the station that Sir Roger had proposed and been accepted.

Everybody, except his colonel, said that it was a very suitable match.

Mabel Hunter was lovely enough for anything, and as for old Hunter—well, he played as good a hand at whist as most people.

Colonel Grant only said that he was glad that Jerry had no female relations, or he might have caught it for letting so great a personage be ensnared by the first pretty face he ran against.

Only one other person was at all dissatisfied, viz., Jack Bramston, who was firmly persuaded that the girl did not care a rap for her lover.

Indian marriages are generally hasty affairs, and the approach of the hot weather left little margin for delay.

At the request of his fiancée, Roger changed his leave to England for six months' leave to the Hills.

Mabel rather liked the idea of figuring in

Simla as Lady Vane, and not having seen anything of Indian society was doubly anxious to get a peep at it while she could.

She thought, in common with most people, that Sir Roger, as soon as he married, would go home and settle down on his estates.

The day was fixed and everything ready. The officers of the artillery were giving a dance a couple of days before the wedding, and on that evening Roger was smoking quietly in his own room, thinking how pleasant it would be to have Mabel there to sit opposite to him.

He was expecting an answer to a note he had just sent to her. Presently his bearer brought it in. He opened it at once, read a few words, and then sprang to his feet with an oath.

It ran as follows:—

"My DARLING,—

"I cannot. If you really love me stay away to-night. Why do you reproach me? You know I love you; what more can I say? Oh, Gerald, had you but been in his place how happy we might have been. I know it is mercenary, but can you blame me? You are but a subaltern, he all that a woman could desire in position and wealth. Try to forgive and to forget. Good-bye for ever, darling."

"MABEL."

Sir Roger bit the amber mouthpiece of his meerschaum till it broke. Then he said bitterly,—

"I wonder what she said in the other note."

He walked across to the door of Jack Bramston's room, and opened it.

"Can you lend me a Bengal Army List, Jack?" he asked.

Jack stared at him as he mechanically handed him the book he required. His friend's face was hard and drawn, and he spoke with a rasping sound.

Roger had no secrets from his friend.

"Read that!" he said, and threw across the note to him.

Jack read it in silence; when he reached the end he hit the table a thump, and cried,—

"I know it! Gerald, indeed, it's that fellow Poyntz, the adjutant of old Hunter's regiment. Well, you've had a narrow escape."

He was startled as he said this by a heavy sound. Roger had sunk into a chair, and with his face covered with his hands was sobbing like a child.

Jack rose softly, and closed the door. He did not wish anyone to see his friend's weakness.

What happened in the next half-hour no one ever knew.

At the end of that time Jack came out alone, and falling foul of his native watchman knocked him down. His groom (also a native) next met him, and was rewarded with a sound thrashing.

He was a kind master, as a rule, and the sufferers only shook their heads, and came to the conclusion that he had taken a peg too many.

Sir Roger dressed that evening with unusual care. He wore his full dress and all his decorations, and having naturally a handsome face and good figure, he was the admired of all as he entered the ball room.

He shook hands with the colonel of the artillery, paid his respects to the hostess, and then looked round the room for Mabel. He soon spied her chatting with one of the young gunners, and walking up to her offered his arm, and said,—

"Come into the verandah, Mabel."

Something in his voice struck her, and she looked up into his face. He felt her hand tremble on his arm.

When they were away from the crowd he drew the letter from his pocket, and handed it to her.

She took it. Then as soon as she saw the first words she turned white, and leant against a chair.

"You might have been honest with me, Mabel," was all he said.

With a low moan she sank fainting at his feet.

The guests thought Sir Roger had seen a ghost when he re-entered the room. He walked straight up to one of the ladies, and said,—

"Would you mind looking to Miss Hunter in the verandah? I think she is ill."

While they were crowding round the girl he found out Colonel Grant, and asked for leave at once in anticipation of the leave he had obtained for his honeymoon.

The next day he was gone, and a month later he and Jack Bramston were on board a P. and O. steamer en route to Brindisi.

As for Miss Hunter the letter found beside her told its own tale, and Colonel Hunter took charge of it.

He was a man rather of action than words. He sent for his adjutant next morning, and told him that as he had got Mabel into a scrape he should marry her.

"That'll be punishment enough for you both," he said, grimly. "I'll allow you nothing."

This extraordinary wedding actually took place.

On the morning of the wedding day Jack Bramston's cart drove up to Colonel Hunter's bungalow, and Jack handed a sealed packet to the servant.

It was addressed to Miss Hunter. Mabel knew the writing, and opened it with some qualms of conscience. It was a small box containing a handsome gold bracelet. A slip of paper fell out of it, on which was written, "With Sir Roger Vane's best wishes for the future."

Arrived in England Sir Roger found that he had forgotten everything except the fact that he was a catch. The idea that every woman he met would try to marry him for his money had become almost a monomania.

The brief episode of his society-seeking had faded, and he had sunk back into his quiet habits and his peaceful ways.

He had paid a visit to the St. Johns, but finding that Julia, the eldest daughter, an insipid girl, with a washed-out look and no ideas, was thrown at his head (to use a common expression) he fled from them to Danebury.

There the people got up a ball to welcome him on his return, at which all he saw was rows of chaperones all eager to get a word with him, and where he found that to dance with any young lady was sure to entail an invitation to spend a fortnight at her father's house.

Back he flew to town, where he told Jack Bramston that he'd give his ears to be Jerry Vane again with four hundred a-year and peace.

Jack got rather alarmed at his friend's wildness, and at last suggested a retreat. So changing his name for the time being, and becoming Captain Lane, he retired to Hasherton, where, as has been seen, he very speedily recovered his equanimity, and where he bids fair to become a great favourite in the village.

CHAPTER II.

WHEN the pony-carriage reached the Hall, Sybil at once pleaded fatigue, and escaped to her own room.

The second bell had rung for dinner before she reached the drawing-room, and all the family were already assembled with the exception of the Squire, who for a wonder was late.

As she opened the door she at once saw that her adventure of the afternoon was the subject of conversation, and she was forthwith greeted with a fire of questions.

"Ah, here's the truant at last!" said Bella, the daughter of the house. "Come, Sybil, and make a clean breast of it. Here is Aunt Jane telling us all that she found you walking

down the village with somebody or other who had his arm round your waist."

"Arm-in-arm, my dear," interposed Aunt Jane. "I never said his arm was round Sybil's waist."

"Eh! eh! what's this?" cried the Squire, who entering the room at this moment only caught the last remark, "whose arm was round whose waist?"

"Sybil was found by Jane walking with a gentleman in the village," said her mother.

"I never said a gentleman," again interposed Mrs. Hastie. "I said a young man of gentlemanly appearance."

"Nothing like accuracy Jane," said the Squire. "Why bless me!" he added, looking at the clock, "ten minutes past seven, the soup will be cold. Come along, Jane," and offering his arm to his sister he led the way into the dining-room.

Once seated at table the questioning began again. Sybil, not without a blush or two, described how she had walked too far and must have fainted, and that Captain Lane had found her there, and had most kindly brought her some water, and had offered her his arm as far as the village, which she had been obliged to accept, as she felt too weak to walk by herself.

"How did you find out his name?" asked Bella at the end of her story.

"I called at the post-office for some stamps"—poor Sybil was blushing in real earnest now—"and I found out he lodged there. I mean he told me that he lodged there, so I asked Mrs. Prince what his name was."

"Captain Lane!" cried Mrs. Hastie. "There used to be a Captain Lane in the 91st N.I. at Jubbulpore, when my poor husband was judge there. But he was very stout, and people said that he drank much more than was good for him. Besides, he was old enough to be this young man's father."

"I wonder what has brought him here?" said Bella.

"He has come to get some fishing," was Sybil's answer.

"Oh, then, he has taken Farmer Jackson's fishing?"

"Then he must be a fool, at all events," broke in the Squire, his temper getting the better of his manners.

Now Farmer Jackson was the only man for miles round who was his own landlord, and, as such, was just as much looked up to by the neighbouring farmers as he was disliked by the squires. Mr. Penshurst, in particular, hated him for several reasons.

First and foremost, Jackson had made Ringbottom Farm the best for miles round. Then, again, the land cut right into the Hasherton Estate, and the result was that Farmer Jackson and his friends got just as much as he liked of the Hasherton game. Indeed, on one occasion, when the quarrel was at its worst, he had stood between two coverts of the Squire's, when the latter had a shooting party, on one of his own fields, and had amused himself by shooting the birds as they flew overhead. Legally he was within his rights, as he shot the game on his own land, and the Squire had no redress beyond shaking his fist at him.

Then this very feeling was another sore subject, for Jackson, who had about half a mile of the river, got all the benefit of the Squire's strict preserving, and netted a fair sum yearly from the same.

Latterly there had been no open war between them, but the Squire always affected to believe that the fishing, in particular, was worthless, and had, indeed, openly condoled with one or two disappointed sportsmen (for who ever thinks he gets his money's worth when he takes a thing by advertisement!), and had once gone so far as to offer one of them a day's fishing in his own preserves. True, the offer was not accepted, as the angler was leaving, but it had had a certain effect in the neighbourhood, as such things will, in depreciating the value of Jackson's fishing; and the latter knew it, and loved the Squire in proportion to his sense of injury.

Seeing that they were straying into dangerous ground, the ladies quickly changed the subject, and dinner passed off without any further remark. The truth was Squire Penshurst's only son was away, and, being left alone with the women of the family, he had, perhaps, a trifle too much of his own way. There is no such autocrat as a country squire without near neighbours, and the master of Hasherton was no exception, but rather an exaggerated specimen of his class.

Where force fails tact sometimes wins the day. The Squire dismissed the subject with the ladies, and sat drinking his usual allowance of port. But upstairs quite a different view prevailed, and the four ladies sat in council, or rather three of them; for Sybil, afraid to show too much interest in the subject, pretended to read a book in one corner of the room.

The Squire was in rather a better temper after his dinner. His wife saw it, and approached at once the subject uppermost in her thoughts.

"This Captain Lane, my dear!" she said; "don't you think we ought to show him a little civility after his kindness to Sybil to-day?"

"Bless me, my dear," answered the Squire, a trifle testily; "can't you get this young man out of your head? Because a young gentleman finds a silly girl, who has walked too far in the heat, lying on a bank, and offers to assist her, as any one was bound to, you want at once to rush into intimacy with him, ask him to your house, and finally, I suppose, make him a present of whichever of your daughters he happens to take a fancy to. Very pretty, upon my word, Maria, and just like you, too."

"I don't want either to ask him to dinner, John," was his wife's answer, "or to get upon terms of intimacy, and certainly not to offer him one of the girls, or—"

Why did Sybil blush?

"Tut, tut! let the man alone!" said her husband. "Depend upon it, that if he wanted to know us he could have got an introduction to us. I flatter myself my family are sufficiently well-known to enable him to obtain a letter to me. Especially, he added, 'when we are the only people within five miles.'"

"Quite true, John," said Mrs. Hastie, "and coming from India too, it would have been so easy for him to get an introduction to me from any of my poor husband's old friends."

"What! cried her brother, 'has he served in India?'"

Now if there was one thing on which the Squire had a weakness it was on the subject of travelled people. Educated at the grammar school of the neighbouring county town, he had never with the exception of a few runs to London on business, been outside his native county, and entertained an old-fashioned respect for all more venturesome than himself. Above all, he considered a person who had made a voyage to India a very remarkable individual; and his sister, Mrs. Hastie, owed much of her influence in the family to the fact that she had braved the perils of a voyage to the East.

"Oh yes!" said Sybil, taking part in the conversation for the first time. "He spoke several times of Benares."

"Well, then, I think, perhaps," said her father, "that we might show him some attention. We are the only society in the place, and owe it to ourselves not to overlook anybody who happens to visit Hasherton. Very civil to Sybil, too. Very well, I will call on him to-morrow—no, to-morrow is Sunday—on Monday then, and thank him, and if he seems a gentlemanly young fellow you can ask him to dinner, you know."

This was enough. He took up his book again. The ladies exchanged glances expressive of victory, and Sybil blushed happily in a corner.

Sir Roger, meanwhile, quite unconscious of the plots which were being hatched at the Hall to break through his plans of solitude,

had smoked his pipe and retired to rest, and he did not again think of his adventure of the day before till his attention was caught by a passing carriage, as after breakfast he was walking in the garden in front of Mrs. Prince's neat little cottage. To recognise the white ponies was the work of a moment, and to decide almost as quickly to go to church followed his recognition of one at least of the occupants, and within ten minutes he was dressed in a dark coat, and seated in a big square pew close to the reading-desk.

In the old-fashioned church there was little to be seen till the service commenced, and, as the congregation rose, his eye wandered in vain over the surrounding pews in an effort to discover where the Squire's family sat, and it was not until he looked straight into the chancel that he saw what he was in search of in the shape of a large pew, or rather room, built out from the choir behind the reading-desk. There they all were. First he noticed the Squire in front, with his double eye-glasses on his nose and his large prayer-book in front of him, while among the other people scattered about behind, though with her back to him and her eyes fixed on her book, was Sybil.

It would be too much to expect that Sir Roger paid much attention to the service that day. He was occupied in casting sidelong glances at his companion of the day before.

He was not long in coming to the conclusion that Sybil was a very pretty girl. To tell the truth, she had been more than ordinarily careful over her toilet that day on the chance of somebody's being in church, and, in addition to this, she had recovered from the fatigues of the previous day, and now was looking her best.

Sir Roger tried in vain to get a glimpse of her face, but she was particularly careful not to give him the chance.

Once only at the beginning of a hymn did she look his way. Momentary as the glance was Roger caught her eye, and felt satisfied.

It is but justice to the other ladies in the Squire's pew to say that they at least had no scruples in looking his way, and even got the length of a whispered conference, the result of which was highly complimentary to Sir Roger's bearing and appearance.

The service in due course came to an end, and the congregation filed out of church.

Sir Roger, when he reached the porch, saw that the pony-carriage was still at the gate, and unoccupied.

The Squire's pew had a private door on the far side of the church, and it took the party a little while to reach the main path.

As he looked round Roger saw them all coming down a side-path, and at once affected to be busily engaged in examining the tombstone of a farmer deceased, whose many virtues were recited at length, which gave him every excuse for lingering.

The Squire was talking loudly about the sermon; and apparently quite unconscious of anybody's presence.

As the ladies came by Sir Roger looked up, and, catching Sybil's eye, raised his hat.

A very faint bow and a very vivid blush was the result.

The action, however, had not escaped the Squire, who, in a very audible whisper, asked who the stranger was.

Then, apparently, a hurried consultation took place, and a minute or two afterwards Sybil and her mother got into the carriage and drove off, while Mrs. Hastie and Bella walked away down the road.

The Squire alone remained, and, after a moment's hesitation, turned round and walked up to where Roger stood. As he approached he touched his hat and said,—

"Permit me to thank you, sir, for your assistance to my daughter yesterday. My name is Penshurst. You may have heard it mentioned here?"

"Certainly," said Roger, quietly, for he was more accustomed to dealing with strangers than the other. "May I introduce myself as Captain V— Lane, I mean?"

The Squire never noticed his mistake, but added quickly,—

"It was very kind of you to look after my daughter yesterday—very stupid of Sybil to walk so far. She has not long since had a severe illness, and is hardly strong enough yet to take these long walks. Without your assistance she could hardly have got home."

"I'm afraid," said Roger, with a smile, "that Miss Penshurst has exaggerated my good deeds. I only offered her my arm for a quarter-of-a-mile, and I am not sure that that was not superfluous."

"Not at all, not at all," said the other, "it was very good of you."

"I see that the sexton wants to lock the gate," said Roger, rather eager to put an end to the conversation and the Squire's profuse civility. "I believe my road is partly your own."

Squire Penshurst hesitated for a moment, uncertain whether it would not be compromising to his dignity to allow himself to do anything accommodating to so inferior a person as the sexton, but, seeing that Roger had already started to walk, he thought he had better follow him.

"You have served in India, I believe, Captain Lane?" he began, "at least, so I understood my daughter to say."

"Yes," said Roger, "I was ten years in the East."

"A fine country, I believe?"

"A fine country for a poor man," said Roger, not intending to deceive the other, and little thinking the construction which would be put upon it afterwards. "My time there was a very happy one, and I am sometimes sorry that I ever left it. You get so many things there one misses at home—the ponies, the sport, the society, all seem far better than one gets here. I fancy many fellows in the service wish themselves back again after they get home."

They had by this time reached the post-office, and as the Squire had by this time decided that Roger was a very gentlemanly young man, he said, as the other stopped at the gate,—

"Will you give us the pleasure of your company at luncheon to-day, Captain Lane? My sister, Mrs. Hastie, spent several years in India, and doubtless you have many friends in common. In any case, she will be delighted to hear about the country. Besides, my daughter will be glad to have an opportunity of thanking you for your kindness yesterday."

Strange to say the last consideration decided the man who had come to Hasherton to avoid ladies' society.

"Thanks, very much, but I am afraid—" he began.

"No, I will take no refusal," said the other, whose dignity was beginning to reassert itself under the feeling of patronizing this friendless young man.

So it was settled, and the two gentlemen walking on, soon overtook Mrs. Hastie and Bella.

The Squire went through the necessary introductions. Both ladies bowed, and Roger lifted his hat.

"Captain Lane spent ten years in India, Jane," said Mr. Penshurst, by way of commencing the conversation.

"Did you, indeed, Captain Lane?" said Mrs. Hastie. "My poor husband was in the Civil Service. You may have heard the name?"

"The only Hastie I met in India was Gerald Hastie, of the Hastingsabad contingent," said Roger. "Is he any relation of yours?"

"Cousin Gerald!" cried Bella. "Did you know him?"

"Intimately. He and I were on the staff together. I do not think I have a greater friend out of my own regiment."

"Gerald is my husband's son by his first marriage," explained Mrs. Hastie. "I was left his guardian, and as he often visited here with me pieces got into the habit of calling him cousin; though, of course, he is no relation of theirs."

"Fancy your knowing Gerald!" said Bella; "why it is an age since he was at home. Do tell us all about him?"

What Roger had to say about young Hastie has nothing to do with this story beyond the fact that by the time they reached the Hall he was on the best of terms with his hostess.

The Squire's ear had been caught by Roger's chance admission about having been on the staff, Mrs. Hastie was delighted by his corroboration of such of her Indian experiences as she aired on the occasion, and Bella was eager to hear anything about her cousin Gerald, whose handsome face and fine uniform displayed in a photograph sent to his step-mother had made a great impression on both young ladies.

The two ladies went upstairs to change their things, and the Squire led the way into the drawing-room.

There was only one occupant, and Roger at once found himself shaking hands with Sybil, who having returned in the carriage was already in the room.

"My daughter Sybil," said the Squire, gaily. "I need not introduce you, as you did that for yourselves yesterday; and now, Captain Lane, I'll leave you for a few minutes if you'll excuse me; Sybil will entertain you in the meantime."

Roger blurted out something about Miss Penshurst being enough for anybody, but luckily nobody overheard it, and the next minute the two were for the second time tête-à-tête.

"I must first of all thank you for your assistance yesterday, Captain Lane," said Sybil, "and apologize for running away so unceremoniously from you, but really my aunt was in such a hurry."

"So I saw," said Roger, with a smile, as he recollected the good lady's haste, "and," he added, with a touch of embarrassment, "I, too, owe you an apology for my rather unconsidered remarks about the society of the neighbourhood."

"Oh!" she said, with a laugh, "you did not think that I might be one of them. Well we will cry quits then. It is great fun sailing under false colours, you know; you get such funny things said to you, don't you?"

"Yes," said Sir Roger, rather grimly. He was beginning to be a little uncomfortable himself about sailing under false colours.

"Well then, it is all right," said Sybil, "we won't think any more about it, only I do hope you won't find poor papa quite so pompous as you expected, or," she added, rather maliciously, "his daughters such a very great drawback."

"Miss Penshurst, you are determined to punish me for my misdeeds."

"Oh no. I only want to teach you the next time you feel tempted to play the knight-errant for damsels in distress."

"To run away and leave them to find their own way home," rather crossly.

"No, not at all," said Sybil, hastily, as she noticed that he did not like it, and was afraid he might relapse into the shyness of the day before. "That would never do, a good action always brings its own reward."

"Mine has already," said Roger, rather too pointedly, for Sybil's eyes dropped, and she became silent.

The entrance of the ladies at this moment put a stop to the conversation.

"Mamma, let me introduce Captain Lane," said Sybil, and Roger had again to undergo the painful—to an Englishman, at all events—operation of being thanked.

"Maria," said Mrs. Hastie, at the end of it all, "did I show you Susan Hastie's letter all about the ball that the county gave Sir Roger Vane on his return?"

"No," said Mrs. Penshurst, with great interest. "Do you know Sir Roger Vane, Captain Lane? Perhaps you met him in India?"

"I never met him," said Roger, with great truth, thinking all the while that this was, indeed, Nemesis.

"Such a charming young man! Only fancy that splendid Danebury Park and ever so many thousands a year! He succeeded most unexpectedly some few months ago, and has just returned from India, where, I believe, he served with great distinction."

"I suppose I have met him," said Roger. "Is he a K.C.B.?"

"No; a baronet," said Mrs. Hastie. "Well, they gave him a grand fancy dress ball, and he went in uniform. Susan says he has a most distinguished appearance, and that his bosom was covered with medals. All the young ladies at once fell in love with him, and Susan adds that he was very attentive to her daughter Kate"—(which was that! thought Roger)—"but I can hardly understand that, as Kate—who is, of course, a dear good girl—is so very plain, and has hair which I could never allow to be auburn!"

Sir Roger did recollect Miss Kate Hastie, and the reminiscence amused him. He could not help smiling.

"What are you laughing at, Captain Lane? Do you know Kate Hastie?" said Bella.

"I was laughing at Mrs. Hastie's description," said Roger, avoiding the question.

"Well," continued Mrs. Hastie, "so far as I can make out, after at least half-a-dozen of them thought they had safely engaged him to lawn-tennis, picnics, etc., two days after the ball they each got a polite note, regretting that pressing business took him to town, and he has not been back since. In fact, he is supposed to have gone abroad."

"See what you have missed, Sybil!" said Mrs. Penshurst. "If you had been well enough to accept Mrs. Hastie's invitation you might have gone to the ball and met Sir Roger, who is by all accounts a very nice young man."

"And made you the seventh anxious mother!" laughed Bella.

Here the bell rang for luncheon, and they all filed out of the room.

Roger, who, of course, was the last, had fallen into an absent fit, and was left standing.

Sybil noticed this, and, turning back, said,—

"Are you coming in to luncheon, Captain Lane?"

"I beg your pardon," he said, "I was thinking."

"A penny for your thoughts," laughed Sybil.

"I was thinking if he had seen you Sir Roger would not have been in such a hurry to run away."

Clearly Sir Roger's wife were still wool-gathering.

CHAPTER III.

"DEAR JACK,—I have had it on my mind to write to you for a long time, and no doubt you will be wondering what has become of me, and possibly thinking that I have broken down in Husherton, or possibly committed suicide. But such is not the case. I am alive and well, and regret to say have been enjoying myself. I will tell you all about it."

"About a week after I got down here I found one of the Squire's daughters who had over-ruled her strength, and as in duty bound helped her home. The next day I met the father at church, and got an invitation to tiffin and afternoon church. There are two girls in the family, the eldest a little too clever for my taste, but the younger I really think quite the nicest girl I ever met, and as pretty as possible. I thought, as doubtless you did too, that after the Danesbury episode I had had enough love-making, and was not very likely to be caught again; but the truth is I am quite as ready to make a fool of myself as ever."

"The fact is, the people here have not the faintest notion who I am, and have never even asked what regiment I belong to. I very nearly let the cat out of the bag the first day by saying that I knew Gerald Hastie, who is a relation of theirs, but they were not sharp enough to pick it up, and I am still at large."

"I have, of course, said nothing to Sybil yet, and possibly I never may; but I like her very much, and it is so refreshing to find that you get on well with a girl for your own sake, and not because you have a handle to your name, and more money than you know how to spend. I am almost beginning to think that she likes me, and if she ever shows it I am done. Of one thing I am certain, viz., I will never tell that I am Sir Roger until I am married. I distrust everybody since Mabel Hunter, and even now I don't feel safe. You remember my making you dance with a red-headed girl at the Danebury ball? Well, she's a sort of relation of these people, and her mother wrote a long letter descriptive of the ball and 'dear Sir Roger' to the aunt of these girls, who has a sort of standing invitation to live here, and, if you please, they must needs read it all out to me and comment on it. It appears the Danebury people think I have gone abroad or to some out-of-the-way place, but in any case they are quite off the scent."

"I wish that you were here, old fellow, to advise me in this matter. I really don't know what to do; it is wrong, I think, to trifle with a girl's affection under false colours, particularly when one is so very different from what one pretends to be. But I have a sort of weak consolation in the fact that the reality is so much better than the sham."

"As regards the Squire, I don't so much mind, for I don't think he would mind much if somebody walked off with both his daughters. He is a pompous old gentleman, with an inordinate family pride, and nothing else to make him remarkable."

"Poor little Sybil, on the other hand, has never been outside Husherton, and is utterly inexperienced in the ways of the world, so that she is just the sort of girl to fall in love with the first man who shows her any attention, and probably, after marrying me, would find out that she had made a mistake."

"That's exactly what I don't want. Mabel Hunter, at all events, was marrying with her eyes open, and she deliberately wanted to throw over the sentiment for the advantage. So here, you see, I am, my dear fellow, perched between two stools, and therefore all the more likely to get a fall."

"On the one hand I am averse to marrying the girl under false colours, on the other I want to make certain that she knows her own mind. Add to this another important fact—viz., that I'm in love. There, now, it's out! I feel much better. I have been trying to conceal the fact all through this letter"—(a very poor try, thought Jack, when he read it)—"but now that I have got rid of it, I feel all the better for it. I'm living in such an atmosphere of deception that it is quite refreshing to tell the truth."

"Upon my word, Jack, if you know Sybil you'd fall in love with her too. It's impossible even for a sordid fellow like me to be about for three weeks with an angel like that without being touched; and as her people have never put a stop to our intimacy, why have been a good deal together; that's the worst of it, you see."

"Here I am, under a false name, affecting a false position, and after getting the cat into a man's house, I must needs make matters worse by making love to his daughter behind his back, and getting hard hit into the bargain, while by my abominable folly I must needs go and put myself in a position I don't see my way out of, and into which I ought never to have got."

"On one point, however, I am quite firm; I don't mean to show my colours yet awhile. Good heavens! when I think of the misery I suffered when I found out about that fellow Poyntz, and the worse misery that I escaped of marrying a woman who only cared for my position, and not for me, I can only say that I would fifty thousand times rather be in such a fix as this, than discover myself. Only I want your advice.—Yours ever,

"ROGER VANE."

Jack Bramstone, accustomed as he was to surprises, was fairly amazed at his friend's

letter. He had sent him to Husherton chiefly to get him out of harm's way, and here he was, within a month, on the eve of committing himself.

"Well," said he to himself; "upon my word, matrimony would be, I think, the best thing for him," and acting on this idea, he took the first train to Husherton.

A hired fly took him to the post-office, where he ascertained that there was a bad to be had; so, having left his baggage, he took his hat and strolled out into the village.

He had not gone very far before he found himself confronted by a large, red-brick house, which was most certainly inhabited.

Jack looked at it with some surprise, as it seemed strange that Roger had never mentioned that there were any other people in the place besides the Squire's family.

Determined to solve the mystery, he turned back and entering the little village grocery made a pretence of wanting something, and began to question the grocer's wife about the red house.

The answer was that the house had stood empty for the past two years; in fact, since Mr. Bones, who had been in the grocery line in Exeter, and had saved money and built this place in Husherton, died.

He was a bachelor, and his house and business were all made over to his nephew, who was now one of the leading tradesmen in Exeter.

The house was fully furnished, with only the gardener and his wife to look after it, but three days since a telegram had come from the owner to say it was taken by an elderly gentleman who might be expected any day.

Jack asked no more questions, and on leaving the shop saw Sir Roger coming down the road, and at once accosted him.

"Hallo, Jack," said his friend; "so you've come in person have you? Very good of you, old fellow. How's everybody getting on in town?"

"All right, and what have you been doing down here?"

"Why, did you not get my letter?" inquired Sir Roger.

"I should rather think I did get your letter, or else I should not have been here. But here we are at your house; how the Danebury people would be surprised if they caught their dear Sir Roger living in cheap lodgings in an out-of-the-way place like this!"

"Hush, Jack; Mrs. Prince has got ears as sharp as a needle; she hears through two doors, I think. Remember, I'm Captain Lane down here."

"All right, Jerry, but order in dinner; I've been travelling since six o'clock this morning, and am as hungry as a hunter."

Dinner was ordered and despatched, and the two friends, having lighted their pipes, retired to the end of the garden to enjoy the lovely summer evening.

Then Sir Roger told his friend that he had not as yet spoken to Sybil, and, indeed, in view of the circumstances, thought it only right to speak first to her father. This he intended to do next morning, as he had an invitation to luncheon.

Jack took care to point out to him that he was committing a great mistake in beginning his married life by having a secret from his wife; but Sir Roger was firm, and declared that he had every intention of keeping up his incoognito till after his marriage.

Then Jack tried to persuade him to speak first to Sybil, but here again he was firm.

Curiously enough, he was half-way between two courses; he wished to keep up a strict incoognito and pass himself off as a nobody with the Penshurst family, while, on the other hand, he was anxious to propose for Sybil in the most open way.

Jack pointed out the difficulties of the course; he was taking, but he might have saved his breath, for when they separated for the night Sir Roger still adhered to his original plan of action.

(To be concluded in our next.)

CINDERELLA.

CHAPTER XXXV.

In time Polly Curzon obtained admittance into the county asylum as Phoebe's niece, and on payment of a small annual sum, and Phoebe had her heart's desire, the two-storeyed house, venetian blinds, and all.

When miserable William Johnson happened to deary this august and important lady in the distance he no longer dared face her. He fled down an ally or dived into the nearest shop.

What a fool he had been! he told himself ten times a day; why, Phoebe was rolling in riches, and lived like a queen!

He was very sharp, querulous, and altogether unpleasant to his blue-eyed, but now rather faded Kitty, as he dwelt upon, and, indeed, more than once expounded at length, "what might have been." Did Phoebe but know it, her revenge was complete.

To return to Polly Curzon.

She was very quiet, very tractable, very inanimate and dumb. She seemed to have no memory whatever.

She was "just like a statue," quoth the matron, who could move and hear, and know what she was told.

There was comfort in this; but it was certainly very strange that, for a farmer's daughter, she should be so utterly and completely at sea when set down on her knees with pail and brush to scrub the wards.

True, her hands were wonderfully shaped, and white. This her aunt accounted for by her long illness.

Her wedding-ring had disappeared.

No one would have recognised her as she knelt at her work in a blue print, with short sleeves, and a coarse apron, her hair all out close round by her ears, and an absolutely vacant, dazed expression in her once magnificent and speaking dark eyes.

Her cheeks had fallen in, her features were sharpened, her colour entirely gone, her hands reddened and made coarse by her daily and now accustomed task.

Visitors passing by to see more wealthy patients, or those in her own class, had more than once remarked that she was a genteel-looking girl, with a nice figure, and that it was a pity.

No one dreamt for a second that the young woman timidly moving to one side with her brush and pail as they passed by was a Russian Countess and a Baronet's wife!

She was rather a favourite with the nurses, being very quiet, very obedient, and no trouble.

A whole year elapsed, during which Phoebe now and then came to look up her niece, and report progress elsewhere.

"Progress," she declared, "there was none."

But she was wrong. The wish was father to the thought in her case, and a keen eye, a less interested eye, would have seen a slow but sure improvement in the passage-washer, Polly Curzon.

True, she never spoke; but she had become quicker in her movements. She was not quite such an automaton. There was a look of dawning intelligence in her eyes, like dimmest, faintest daybreak coming over an ink-black horizon—a look as if she was trying to remember something.

It would be a bad day for some people when her memory came back to her again!

For a whole year she made no very great strides towards recovery, but she was taking some slow and sure steps in that direction.

At the end of eighteen months she had been promoted to the laundry, and much preferred the ironing board to the stone flags for her operations, though here, as before, she was at first quite surprisingly clumsy.

One afternoon the laundry was full, most of the inmates were chatting and singing, the "dummy," as she was called, was busily

ironing aprons, and had just placed a heater in the fire, before which she stood for a moment, and then suddenly looking round her with her big dark eyes she spoke.

It was in a low voice, almost a whisper, but she certainly spoke.

Every one paused and stared in amazement. The maddest there were interested.

She spoke again, a little louder this time, to a hatchet-faced woman beside her, who had the expression on her features of an irritated wolf. This time all heard her; she said,—

"Where am I?"

"Where are you? That's a good idea! So you've found your tongue at last, have you? Where are you, my dear? You're where we all are."

"And that's in the Frogshire County Asylum!" screamed a voice from a distant corner. "Don't you know that we are all mad here?" with the laugh of a lunatic Macaw.

"Hush, hush, Jessie," said a nurse, soothingly. "Jessie must be a good girl now. Jessie, Jessie!"

"A good girl!" she shrieked; "why should I be a good girl. I won't be a good girl!" beginning to dance up and down, and, snatching the white curtain she was ironing off the board and tearing it into ribbons with the fury of a wild animal—the screams of a hyena.

"Jessie, Jessie; now, now, now you're a naughty girl! You'll get the jacket if you don't behave yourself," expostulated the nurse, unavailingly.

Jessie was "off."

And Jessie cared nought for her blandishments. She only screamed louder, made a diabolical face at her, and flew at the woman nearest, and fastened her hands in her hair.

What a scene ensued! All the other mad women became wildly excited. They wanted nothing but example. They threw down their work, and screamed, and whooped, and sang, and fought, and danced. It was positively Pandemonium—no more and no less.

Polly Curzon shrank up against the wall terrified, and trembling in every limb.

Her dawning intelligence accepted the mad woman's statement, backed at once, as it was, by such unanswerable illustration.

She screamed when a woman with hair on end, eyes rolling in her head, came suddenly rollicking up to her, poked her face close to hers, and yelled,—

"Yah!"

No wonder the two nurses rang a bell. The tumult was getting worse instead of better, and they were quite incapable to deal with all the lunatics alone.

In less than a minute two big, broad-shouldered men came running in, and the ringleaders were seized—two garments, resembling sacks, but, in truth, strait waistcoats—were flung over their heads, in spite of the most furious resistance on their part, and once induted into these articles, their arms pinioned, they became comparatively tame, merely making faces at their captors, and gibbering impotently; and over the other mad women came a silence and a lull—the immediate result of the awful warning before them.

As for Polly Curzon, she had fainted, and no wonder. To come to her senses in a lunatic asylum, among a crowd of shrieking maniacs, was almost enough to have deprived her of reason for the remainder of her days. It certainly threw her back.

She recovered from her faint in her normal condition, dumb and dazed, looking as before, and for two or three months she remained in that state, and then again she took steps on the road to recovery.

This time she talked, and whispered, and muttered to herself a good deal. She stared at her reflection very critically in the glass when she dusted out the sub-matron's room, as was now her daily duty. The head nurse,

a sub-matron, was an elderly, cheerful-looking woman, of indomitable nerve and splendid physique.

She was, nevertheless, a good deal startled when one evening as she sat at her tea, and Polly, her attendant, had just placed a plateful of buttered toast beside her, she, instead of leaving the room, paused at the other side of the table, looked quite wistfully over at her, and, making a visible effort, spoke, and said, in a pretty, refined English accent,—

"Please tell me what am I now? What am I doing here?"

If the sideboard itself had harangued her, and the teapot broken out into song, Mrs. Bint could not have been more astounded; but she answered presently in the usual soothing formula.

"Why, you are here to get well, my dear, to be sure."

"Get well from—what was it?" putting up her hand to her short locks. "My head—it feels queer still."

"Yes, Polly; but it's getting better. There, now, don't be talking of it, nor exciting yourself, and go and fetch me a tin of sardines."

"Yes; but tell me first who brought me here?"

"There's no harm in letting you know that, my dear," helping herself to sugar with her fingers as she spoke. "Why, your best friend, to be sure—your aunt."

"My aunt!" echoed Polly, "my aunt is dead long ago."

"Maybe it was another aunt. Anyway, she comes to see you every now and then. She'll be main glad to hear you have got your speech; that I'm sure she will."

"But I had only one aunt. She died in Paris nearly a year ago, the Princess Sophie Dormanoff."

Mrs. Bint smiled to herself significantly as she stirred her tea. These poor creatures were all alike. If it wasn't a Princess, it was a Duchess or a Queen. Had they not Mary of Scots and Queen Elizabeth in Polly's own ward?—and there was she, the niece of a Princess, of course.

Princess, indeed! That big, red-faced woman, that looked like a cook who was in a good situation, where the perquisites were ample, and the beer on tap under her own care!

"Yes, yes, Polly, of course. I know all that," said Mrs. Bint, in her most mollifying manner. "I know she died in Paris. But now, like a good girl, just run and get those sardines."

"One minute," persisted her attendant, "only one minute. I know my head is queer and has been queer, and I don't remember things quite yet, but they are coming back. I am not this!" stretching out her bare arms and canvas apron. "I am a lady!"

At this Mrs. Bint nodded her head. This was no commoner hallucination among her patients. She at once acquiesced,—

"Of course you are, my love—a lady born and bred."

"You call me Polly Curzon, but my name is Pauline Curzon; is it, indeed. My husband is Sir Philip Curzon. Does he know that I am here?"

"To be sure and certain he does, my dear," rejoined Mrs. Bint, with the utmost composure.

This announcement was nothing to others that had been made to her, eye, within that very week.

"He knows it, of course, and when you are well he is coming to take you away, and now don't be talking and exciting yourself any more; but do go, as you are bid, and fetch me those sardines, or I shall have done my tea before I get them."

And thus diammed, Polly reluctantly but obediently left the room, whilst Mrs. Bint muttered to herself,—

"So she's found her tongue, and it's th usual thing. Dear, dear me, dear me, they are all the same!"

For some time Pauline made no further effort to regain her own identity, but every day she was becoming more herself. The early hours, the simple food, the regularity of her life, was telling upon her youth and good constitution.

The more she remembered the more she shrank from her companions. Their society became unbearable at last. Once she realized that she was sane among the mad! Every meal was a terror, every night in the ward an agony of apprehension.

How she now loathed those long stone passages, those whitewashed rooms, those great big recreation yards, with sheds and seats for wet weather, where rows of women sat talking and knitting with wonderful lucid intervals, until some small innocent remark was as a spark in tow, and set half-a-dozen jabbering and screaming like a cage full of cockatoos. There was Mary Queen of Scots, a tall very pretty girl of eighteen, whose parents had over-educated an excitable brain, and who walked from ward to ward monarch (in her own opinion) of all she surveyed, with feathers and bits of pink paper and quill pens stuck in her streaming hair.

She had a most lovely voice, and all over the different yards it could be heard high and clear like a bell in the air, penetrating to the "men's side," where it was responded to in kind by an unhappy wretch who promenade the recreation space all day long, uttering extraordinary sounds, being under the impression that he was a trumpet!

Sometimes Queen Mary came into collision with Queen Elizabeth, a squat, grey-haired, old woman, who chewed tobacco and wore a red-checked shawl, and was "handsomely paid for," as she informed her friends in her lucid moments (few and far between).

She had not been over-educated, had never so much as heard of Queen Elizabeth, but did not resent the title. What she did resent was occasional furious onslaughts from Queen Mary, who pulled her by her hoary locks and fiercely demanded, "How she had dared to cut off her head?"

To this Elizabeth replied in kind, and with a shrill request "for that two hundred pounds your father owes me—have it I will," and then a battle royal would ensue that nothing could pacify short of two ward women and threats of the dreaded "jacket."

Here were two hundred women gone mad on many subjects, and driven mad by as many different causes: loss of money, loss of children, loss of lovers, drink, accident, sudden alarm, hereditary insanity, were all represented, and in the midst of all these Pauline Curzon walked and sat and slept a sane woman.

A prolonged sojourn, she was convinced, would render her like one of themselves—like that poor wretch shrieking in the next yard in a strait waistcoat; so she resolved, without further delay, to demand an interview with the matron.

She had asked for it several times very pressingly, and had been put off with such soothing, vague, childish excuses as were thought sufficient for an idiot; but she was resolved to carry her point, and declared that if she was denied an interview she would appeal to the doctor and the board.

This sounded rather sensible, and her talk was equally sensible and coherent, so Miss Hitchins vouchsafed to accord her an audience in her own sanctum in the presence of Mrs. Bint.

"Well, Polly," she said, pleasantly, "I'm glad to hear you are so much better. What can I do for you?"

"Let me go; allow me to leave this awful place at once, this hour, or I shall go really mad."

"Why, Polly, Polly, Polly, what is all this?"

"In the first place, Miss Hitchins," she returned, trembling with excitement and nervousness as she spoke, "my name is not Polly, but Pauline Curzon. I am the wife of

Sir Philip Curzon"—Miss Hitchins was not the least surprised; if she had announced that she was the wife of the King of the Cannibal Islands she would not have wondered in the least. "I was Pauline Rivers. My sisters live at Mount Rivers. I came down to give them, I mean," correcting herself, "to see them, when, I cannot tell, or at least how long ago—I know it was in August. As I left them someone came behind me in the avenue, and gave me a fearful blow, and I recollect nothing till now. It may have been a month ago," glancing hesitatingly out on the autumn-tinted trees, "it might have been a year. I am really and truly Pauline Curzon; I am, indeed, I am rich. If money is of any use to get me free there is plenty"—here she was so overcome she could say no more, and sat down, trembling and completely unstrung, gazing appealingly from Mrs. Bint to Miss Hitchins, as if searching for some faint hope in either of their placid faces.

"Pauline," said the latter, in a cool, business-like tone of voice, "your story shall be looked to at once. The doctor shall see you. Come here again this day week. Now," touching a hand-bell, "you may go. Be a good girl now, and don't be talking and exciting yourself (the usual formula). As Pauline closed the door she said, "Well, Bint, what do you think? It's the same old story, is it not? I daresay now she has relieved her mind we won't be troubled with her again—eh? That's one comfort!"

"I'm not so sure of that, mum," said Mrs. Bint, sagaciously. "There may be something in it. If you look at her eyes, they are not like them others, but clear and steady; and she speaks like a lady."

"Pooh!"—contemptuously—"that goes for nothing! So does Queen Elizabeth, so does the mermaid, and heaps of others."

"The doctor said it wasn't a usual case when she came," remarked Mrs. Bint, impressively; "that it was all from that blow on the head—an accident, the Count said—and, leastways, she's a very genteel young woman. Look at her feet and hands, and very neat in her ways, and that dainty in her food, just like a real lady!"

"My good Bint, you are bewitched!" said the matron, with a laugh of derision. "Have you not been long enough in the place—fifteen years—not to know a crazy girl when you see her? Don't they all fancy themselves queens and ladies? Don't they all come with some cock-and-bull story, sooner or later?"

"True enough, miss. No doubt every word you say is quite true, and you have great experience, but still, in this case, I would inquire; it can do no harm."

And thus the matter was settled. Miss Hitchins agreed that would do "no harm," and inquiries were made; but the results of these inquiries were not favourable to Pauline.

It was true that there had been a Lady Curzon, who had disappeared two years previously; and six months before Polly Carson was "put up" in the asylum she had been drowned at sea, so her relations said, and her husband, Sir Philip, was about to be married immediately to a beautiful American girl, a Miss Derwent.

When this intelligence came to Miss Hitchins she sent for Bint, and triumphantly imparted the facts to her without delay, not forgetting to add the agreeable and proverbial "I told you so," and Mrs. Bint was obliged to bear news to Polly Carson "that the inquiries respecting her had not been satisfactory, and there was no use in doing anything more at present."

Whereupon Polly, who had been listening with a ghastly face and wide-open and incredulous eyes, had flung herself down upon Mrs. Bint's capacious sofa, and wept and cried and wrung her hands just exactly like any sane person.

Her grief was so natural, so overwhelming, and yet not loud, or, in the least, not like the lunatic outbursts to which she was ac-

customed that Mrs. Bint was quite touched. She endeavoured to soothe Polly in quite a motherly fashion; she patted and stroked her hair, and actually invited her to stop and have a cup of tea, to which invitation the miserable Pauline gladly acceded; anything to get away from that awful long table in the refectory, lined with grinning or lowering faces, and garnished with mugs, tin plates, and harmless appointments.

"If you are what you say, Polly, don't you fret; for it will all come right, you take my word for it. And now, here's your tea," said Mrs. Bint, consolingly, cutting the bread-and-butter herself all the same, and not trusting Polly with a bright steel knife. "You cheer up, and you shall come in here of an evening whenever you please if you're a good girl, and you can bring your sewing, and read a book, and have a chat."

"And may I write letters?" faltered Pauline, eagerly.

"To be sure, my dear. To be sure, of course you may write letters;" knowing well that every letter that was put into the big letter-box was opened and read—and what letters! Letters to the Queen, letters to the dead, letters of the most extraordinary description and superscription—letters, needless to remark, that were never posted, that never travelled further than the nearest fire or waste-paper basket.

Among these was Pauline's piteous appeals to Mr. Loraine, to Letty, and to Sir Philip—letters that were, of course, never answered. Day after day went by, and still she lived on hope. To-morrow would bring an answer, would bring someone, would bring freedom, and time rolled on, and it was always to-morrow, and her heart was sick with hope deferred.

Mrs. Bint's little room was a veritable haven of refuge to Pauline. Here she worked, wrote her letters and read, and was looked upon with some jealousy by the other inmates as "Mrs. Bint's pet."

Here she heard casually of the death of her aunt, which and occurrence did not affect her in the smallest degree; in fact, she solemnly assured Mrs. Bint that she knew of no such person as Mrs. Phoebe Fleming, unless an old servant that had been at Mount Rivers, and it surely could not be her!

"And do you remember Mount Rivers?" said Mrs. Bint. "What sort of a place is it? Were you brought up there?"

"No, only in a kind of way," rejoined Polly, laying down a pillow case that she was making for her patroness. "I was brought up at a farm first—Farmer Meadows'."

"Eh, what?" exclaimed Mrs. Bint, growing very red. "Why, that's my brother in Canada. I remember little Missy well, and her fair hair; and dear heart but they were set upon the child, and she was very good to them when she grew up, never forgot old friends, sent them plenty of money."

"I was Missy, though you may not believe me, Mrs. Bint," said Pauline. "My hair is dark now, but I believe it was gold once, when I was quite a little thing."

"Do you remember anything more?" asked Mrs. Bint, diplomatically.

"I remember kind old Mams, and Isaac, and Dan, and riding on hay-carts, and the little teapot with the bird on it."

This last insignificant remark caused Mrs. Bint to open her mouth and eyes in undisguised astonishment. She herself had been the donor of that very article.

A child's memory clings to queer things, and Polly must have seen that teapot as a child, seeing that it had emigrated with the family fully twenty years previously.

Good Mrs. Bint was bewildered, and more and more so as the young woman opposite, in the asylum print dress, dragged forth, bit by bit, little of the past—vague pictures of names, and people, and dogs, and horses, her sketches rapidly filled in by Mrs. Bint's own more robust recollection.

From the farm Pauline passed to Mount Rivers, lightly touched on her sisters, her

THE FAIR ELAINE.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

school, her aunt the princess, her wedding, and brought everything down, in fact, to that tragic August afternoon in the avenue at Mount Rivers, leaving out any allusion to Madame Bert, or the rather strained relations between her husband and herself.

It sounded true, and Mrs. Bint's mind was in a perfect chaos. She absolutely was at her wits' end. She shut her eyes and opened them, she rubbed her forehead, she put on and took off her spectacles, and still could not obtain any mental relief. Was it possible that the young woman sitting before her on the sofa, in the coarse dress, and with the orthodox clipped hair, was actually little Missy, and the wife of a baronet rolling in riches?

She was very much inclined to think that she was, and hinted as much to Miss Hitchins, who received the suggestion with smiling, tolerant contempt, "and wondered that Mrs. Bint could be so foolish!"

But Mrs. Bint was confirmed in her opinion a few days later, and from thenceforward remained unshaken in her belief, despite of the sneers of her superior. She had, in her way, been communicative to her *protégée*, told her how long she had been in the place—she did not say asylum—two years; gave her particulars of the appearance of her late aunt, and did all she could to throw light upon the mystery. She also lent Polly books, and now and then an odd newspaper.

It was in the latter that Pauline came upon the account of her husband's tragic death. She read it half through before she could realise it and bring home the facts to her mind.

When Mrs. Bint came bustling into the room ten minutes later she found Polly Carson, with the newspaper in her hand, in a faint upon the carpet.

Polly was given to fainting—quite another strong argument in favour of her being a lady, in Mrs. Bint's opinion—and Polly was a long time in coming to this time. When she did, and was able to speak, she signed to the fatal paper, and burst into floods of tears.

She was not at all fond of her husband lately, as we know; but such a tragic ending affected her, and shook her almost as much as if she had been as devoted to him as in the year subsequent to their marriage, and before her idol had proved itself to have been made of clay—and of very common clay.

Her grief and her tears were strong weapons against the last barrier of Mrs. Bint's misgivings, and they fell.

She soothed and comforted Pauline to the best of her power, but, poor woman, it seemed an awful case, in which so little could be said. How could she comfort this pretty young widow in a lunatic asylum, this friendless widow of a barbarously murdered husband.

There was just one thing she bethought her of saying, and it was this,—

"My dear, between you and me, and to go no further, I'll tell you that I believe you are as sane as I am."

This announcement she made not at the moment, but a few days later.

"I believe that you are Lady Curzon, that you were little Missy, and that there's teen foul play somewhere, as sure as my name's Ann Bint."

"You believe that, really, Mrs. Bint?" exclaimed Pauline, eagerly. "Then I am as good as free; for oh! Mrs. Bint," seizing her by the hand, "if I stay here much longer I shall die. I could not bear it. And if the board and the doctor refuse to listen to me, and my friends won't assist me, I look to you entirely to help me to run away."

A nice suggestion for a patient to make to the sub-matron of the county asylum, and the matron did not say "nay."

(To be continued.)

PRIDE, like the magnet, constantly points to one object—*itself*; but, unlike the magnet, it has no attractive pole, but at all points repels.

PRIDE and passion, evil thoughts and wrongdoing had left their fell impress upon Phillip, and the better nature which had been stirred within him shrank from the face which looked forth upon him.

"How I have warped and defiled myself!" he pursued, "can I ever become a good man again? I can never hope for pardon—I can never hope for happiness again; but, oh! if I might but bridge over the slough in which I have wallowed, pass to the other side and begin anew—if there is any other side for me," he added, wearily.

"What a fool I have been!" he continued, fiercely, as with clenched hands, and a stern, set face he paced the room back and forth like some enraged wild beast; "how she must despise me—how her very tones rang with contempt and aversion! I wonder if the torments of the lost can be any worse than what I suffered last night, as I stood there before that pure and beautiful woman, feeling myself to be like some hideously deformed wretch, soiled, blackened, and defiled, through and through."

"Arley, Arley!" he suddenly cried out, in an intense, remorseful tone; "how could I ever have been such a knave? I know now what I have lost. I have known it all along, but I have been mad, wild, demonized. Ah! I shall never forget how sweetly your voice sounded, when you stood beside me in the court-room in Madrid, and urged me not to 'waste my life thus'—to 'be the true-hearted man you believed me to be when you first knew me,' and begged me so earnestly to come back to England with you. Oh, why—why was I so blind and hardened that I would not heed you? But it is too late now. I have lost you for ever, though your gentle entreaties will ring in my ears as long as I live. Oh! fool, idiot that I have been!"

All day long the wretched man battled with himself—with the evil spirit, the stubborn will and pride that had so long ruled him with such arbitrary power. All day long he was alternately besieged with anger at his folly and remorse, and grief over his ruined life.

Having once again realised and acknowledged his loved for Arley, there had come into his heart such a rush of passionate longing for her; such a wild, despairing regret over the affection which he had scorned and trampled upon, as bowed the strong man like a reed laid prostrate by some fierce tempest.

Night coming on again found him exhausted, and his worn-out nature succumbed to a deep and dreamless slumber, which steeped his senses in grateful oblivion until far into the hours of another day.

Almost like a ghost of himself looked Philip Parton when he at last rose and dressed. For more than thirty-six hours he had not tasted food or drink, and he was weak and trembling as an habitual drunkard who has been deprived of his accustomed stimulants.

But there was a new purpose in his face, which was grave to sternness, while his lips and eyes were resolute.

He went to a coffee-house and breakfasted, then to his old chambers—Gray's Inn—which had been so long deserted.

He spent the day in putting them in order, and in letting most of his old business friends and clients know that he had returned from abroad, and was prepared to resume his business.

That he had been a good lawyer was proved by his former patrons at once pouring in upon him, until, within a week, he was flooded with work, and the idle, dissolute man of six months previous was bending every energy to the task which he had imposed upon himself.

A month after this good beginning he

might have been seen writing far into the night, while his pale face, compressed lips, and troubled brow told that he was engaged upon no pleasant work; and when at last it was nished he threw down his pen, and laid back in his chair with a sigh that was almost a groan.

What he had written was this:—

"ARLEY,—I do not know where you may be, nor how you may be situated, but, believe me, I hope you are much more comfortable and happy than I ever made you. Why I write you at this time, is because I wish to make you what restitution I can, and while I have it in my power to do so. I have also a confession to make to you. Heaven knows that my treatment of you has been bad enough, but you do not yet know all the wickedness and heartlessness of which I have been guilty. I was mad, almost to insanity, over the loss of your fortune, and the fact that you persisted in thwarting me by giving it up, and something possessed me to make you as unhappy and uncomfortable as I could for it. How well I succeeded you alone know."

"But to make my confession complete, I must tell you that before marrying you I had already proposed to Lady Elaine Warburton. Ambition had whispered, 'Secure her magnificent fortune, and a charmed life will be yours.' She refused me, and then, with a sullen stubbornness not to be baffled in my money-getting, I resolved to win you and your twenty thousand pounds. Had you both been poor girls and I a better man I should have sought you alone, and then set myself bravely to work for the treasure I had won; for I loved you—yes, really and truly—as well as my greedy nature would allow me to love anyone beside myself."

"But ill becomes me to speak of this now. I believe that you would have finally won me to a better life by your sweet patience and gentleness, if it had not been for that letter which you received from Annie Vane, telling you of Wil Hamilton's death. From that moment it seemed as if all the furies of the lower regions were whispering in my ears, 'Lady Elaine is free, and if you were, also, a dukedom and a magnificent fortune might yet be yours.'"

"It seems to me now that I must have become insane upon the subject, for no one in his right mind could have nourished the fiendish purpose which took possession of me, and from which now my whole soul revolts—that of releasing myself from the bond which united me to you, returning to England, and winning Lady Elaine, if I could."

"You know how I schemed for a divorce and failed. But, Arley, I was never nearer throwing off the shackles which bound me, and trying to become a good man, worthy of you, than when you came to me after the court and pleaded with me so patiently and earnestly. But the money-fiend still beckoned me, and I turned a deaf ear to you, resolving to return to England, file a petition for a divorce, feeling sure that you would not oppose me again, and then try to achieve my purpose regarding Lady Elaine."

"You doubtless wonder how I obtained means to do all this, knowing that I was almost penniless when you left me; and now comes the most humiliating portion of my confession. Arley, I entered your room one day, during your absence, and stole the contents of your jewel-casket. Yes, I am a thief with all the rest. I meant to take your diamonds only to sell them; but, doubtless you were wearing them, for they were not in the box."

"I found, however, to my intense surprise, a hundred-pound note, and no miser, coming suddenly upon unexpected treasure, ever gloated more than I over the sight of that English money. A portion of it I used to gamble with, and doubled my stake. Thrice I did this in different places, and then came home."

"Your jewels are all safe; my gaming operations had been so successful that I de-

cided to reserve them for a future emergency, and as that is not likely to occur, since I hope, like one of old, I am come to myself. I am spared the additional shame of having pawned my wife's jewels—the treasured mementoes of happier days.

"I shall enclose them in a package with this, also the hundred pounds, with interest, and leave them in my safe, directed to you, so that, in case anything happens to me before I can ascertain where you are to send them to you, you will be sure to get them upon your return.

"This is all the restitution that I am able to make you at present; but I have resumed my old business, and as I am prospered I will deposit a sum, from month to month, in the Bank of England to your account, so that in the future you need lack no comfort that money can buy.

"Something tells me that you will scorn this, coming from one who has used you so badly; but, Arley, if you could know the tortures which I now suffer over the guilt of the past year, you would not have the heart to add another pang to my misery—you would, at least, allow me the comfort of feeling that my efforts to atone, as far as may be, for the wrong I have done you are not entirely fruitless. I can almost see the proud curl of your lips as you read this, and hear you ask, 'What has brought about this radical change? What has induced him at this late hour to begin over again, when nothing seemed to have power to turn him so short a time ago?' It is because I have seen a picture of myself as I am, and it was drawn, too, by a vivid and no gentle hand. I have been shocked, electrified into new life, morally. How? Let further confession answer. I will not spare myself—my humiliation shall be complete.

"I returned to England immediately after you left Madrid, expecting to find you here, and our affairs the subject of every gossiping tongue. But you were not here; no one knew anything, and the field was clear for me to do what I liked. I immediately applied to a man who advertises to secure divorces 'without any unpleasant publicity,' and meanwhile I set myself to work to 'snare my other game.'

"Lady Elaine was in town. I managed to gain access to her presence, and then employed every artifice to make myself agreeable to her. Believe me, not because my base soul held one spark of real love for her. I was not capable of that; for gold alone had become my god, and I had sworn to possess myself of a fortune at any cost. Do you pity me for a dot—an idiot, and say I might have known what the result would be? I could not have won her under any circumstances, least of all now, for her heart is in poor Wil Hamilton's grave, wherever that may be, and she is wedded to his memory.

"I told her a tissue of falsehoods—anything I could think of, to make her believe me an injured, deserted husband; told her that you had gone away with another man, that you refused to remain with me because I could not give you the luxuries to which you had been accustomed, etc. But by some means—I know not what—she learned the truth, and when I went to her and made my wicked proposals she turned upon me like an avenging angel, and if ever a man was made to realize his moral deformity and hideousness, and made to hate himself as something too loathsome for earth, I am that man.

"I cannot repeat what she said, but she made me see that morally I was like some one who has had an eruptive disease in its worst form, and barely escaped with his life—whose vital forces have perhaps been renewed, but who had been so disfigured by the terrible ordeal through which he has passed as to be absolutely repulsive, even to those who had been his best friends, and cause them to turn from him with disgust. Looking upon such a wreck as this, is it to be wondered at that I recoiled from myself with horror?

"Only one thing more, and I will weary you

no longer. As soon as I came to myself I stopped all proceedings for a divorce—I had no right to obtain it; you had always been all that was patient, kind, and true, and the perjury of the thing appalled me. It remains for you to take that step, and you have every right and reason to do so, and I assure you that whatever you may see fit to do in the future, I will remain perfectly passive in the matter—I will never willfully cause you another pang, nor trouble of any kind, while I live. You shall be free if you desire; I will strive never to meet you nor offend you with my presence, and whatever sentence may be passed upon me I will bear it patiently and in silence. But, oh! Arley! Arley!—

A line had been drawn through those last few words, as if they had been unwittingly wrung from him in a moment of passionate pain and remorse, when, as if suddenly recollecting himself, he had stopped and tried to obliterate them; then he had closed with this almost despairing appeal:—

"I have told you all now—my heart is laid bare before you, even as it is before the eye that searches every soul; you know all my folly, weakness and wickedness.

"I do not ask your forgiveness—I have no right to ask it; but some time—when, perhaps, long years have softened somewhat your sense of wrong and pain—if you should chance to learn that I am honestly striving to attain to better things—to regain my lost manhood—will you not let a little divine compassion into your heart and breathe the one single prayer—I should know it and feel its influence, though the world divided us—for

"PHILIP PAXTON."

Such was the confession of this man, who had hung suspended, so to speak, over an awful precipice, and who, looking in helpless and dizzy horror into the depths where he was about to plunge, had been snatched back by a rude, but merciful hand, and now, weak and faint, but resolute, was struggling to get away from the pit that had so nearly proved his ruin.

If the "Lily of Mordant" had never performed another noble action during her whole life the rough probing to which she had subjected Philip Paxton's soul, the truthful picture which she had painted in such vivid colours of his moral depravity, waking his soul to consciousness and better purposes, was a victory which must have won a brilliant star in her celestial crown, and made joy in Heaven over the sinner who repented.

After sitting awhile in sad musing, Philip Paxton aroused himself to fold the thickly-written sheets before him, though his hands shook visibly while doing it; then taking a bank-note from his pocket-book, he enclosed it with the letter in an envelope, and drawing towards him a small box which lay upon the desk, he made the whole up into a neat package, and addressed it to Mrs. Philip Paxton.

Opening a small drawer at his left hand he laid it carefully within, shut and locked the drawer again, and the next moment his head dropped forward upon his hands, while great, deep sobs shook him from head to foot.

It was as if he had just buried far away from his sight the dearest object of his life—and he had. For, henceforth, he felt that Arley would be naught but a sweet memory to him; one whose beauty, gentleness, and value he had, all too late, learned to appreciate, and who was as completely lost to him as if she were really dead, and had been laid to rest in the bosom of the earth.

(To be continued.)

When Brown failed to catch the young lady who slapped his hands at Copenhagen, Fogg remarked that it was quite a marine disaster. "A smack lost, you know," he explained, in answer to interrogating glances levelled at him from all sides.

FACETIE.

A new thing—a boy in church.

The train of thought leads the pencil, and hence it is a lead pencil.

The milkman and dancing master have much in common. They both believe in pumps.

Sometimes asks, "Why is a masher like a match?" and we can't think why unless it is because both are light-headed.

What does "Good Friday" mean? asked one uncle of another. "You'd better go home and read your 'Robinson Crusoe,'" was the withering reply.

"I would die for you!" she exclaimed, pillow her head upon his shoulder. "Oh, no, you needn't, darling," was the quick reply. "I like red hair."

"This way, captain!" shouted an English soldier at Inkerman. "I have a prisoner." "Well, bring him here." "I should like to, but the scoundrel won't let me go."

"My son," said old Precept, "don't take to writing poetry. When I was young like you I was smitten with a beautiful creature, and wrote her a poem. I never saw her again."

"What is that?" exclaimed a lady, as she opened a letter and something like a crumpled postage stamp fell out. "Oh, yes; I remember now. It's that bathing suit I ordered for Nellie."

A little girl went into a chemist's the other day, and said to the proprietor in a half whisper, "If a good little girl hasn't got no money, how much chewing gum do you give her for nothing?"

"I hear," said somebody to Jayki, "that our friend Smith, the attorney, is dead, and leaves very few effects." "It could scarcely be otherwise," returned Jayki, "he had so very few cases."

"Pa, did you say those cigars in your coat-pocket were too strong?" Yes, my son; why?" "Oh, 'cause they broke so easy when I tried them. I was afraid I had misunderstood you."

MAN:—"How many fish have you caught, bub?" BOY:—"Oh, I couldn't count 'em." MAN:—"Why, you haven't any, you little wretch!" BOY:—"That's why I can't count 'em."

When Brown, after eating a dinner at the restaurant, asked the proprietor to charge it, the latter said he should be glad to, but he kept no books. "Keep no books!" exclaimed Brown. "No," replied the other, "there is no accounting for tastes, you know—at least, not in this shop."

A witness, who had been called to give evidence as to the defendant's character, testified that he had always moved in good society. "What do you mean by good society?" asked the court. "Society in which it is fashionable to speak evil," promptly answered the witness.

If you wish to make a man perfectly miserable send him an important message by telephone. Tell him to be sure to meet you at an hotel at a certain hour, say. But when he asks you who you are, don't understand him, and don't give him your name. He'll fret off a pound of flesh an hour trying to make out who it is that has telephoned him.

"The meanest man I have ever seen in all my practice," said a doctor, "is a patient of mine at the West-end. I waited on him for ten years, furnishing medicine and everything, and could never collect a farthing, and the other day he sent a great big basketful of bottles to my office and he wanted me to buy them." "Well, what harm was there in that?" asked his companion. "Oh, none to speak of, only the bottles were the same ones I had been furnishing him with for the ten years I had attended him."

SOCIETY.

THE Empress Eugénie is taking the waters at Carlsbad. She appears constantly in deep mourning, and supporting herself on a cane. The wife of General Bourbaki and the former Prefect of Police, M. Pietri, are in her company. The Empress Eugénie attended the requiem mass for the Comte de Chambord at Carlsbad.

DUBLIN has been quite gay with the many thousands of visitors to the Horse Show, and the somewhat unexpected arrival of the Duke of Edinburgh with the Channel Fleet, added a fresh excitement to the week's gaiety. The little Prince Alfred's appearance much interested the ladies, some of whom seemed to think him a tiny mortal to be sent off on a cruise without any woman's care, but sailors are proverbial for their kindness and attention to women and children, and the young Prince looked a thorough young tar and as happy as possible.

THE marriage of Mr. Richard Grant, youngest son of the late Sir Thomas Grant, B. C. B., with Mabel, eldest daughter of General and Mrs. Charles Baring, was celebrated at Holy Trinity Church, West Cowes, Isle of Wight, on Wednesday, September 3.

The bride, who was conducted to the altar by her father, General Baring, who afterwards gave her away, was attended by four bridesmaids. The bride was handsomely attired in ivory-white satin, the front being draped with Brussels lace caught up with bows of narrow velvet ribbon. The long train was bordered with a ruche of satin, and a spray of orange blossoms was fastened on one side of the bodice. She wore a Brussels lace veil, and orange blossoms in her hair, and her jewels included a sapphire and diamond butterfly, her father's gift, diamond horseshoe brooch, and large diamond crescent fastening the veil.

The bridesmaids looked well in cream crepon costumes, the skirts being trimmed with bouffants and insertion of coffee-coloured lace. The tight bodices had jabots of lace, paniers of lace were prettily draped on one side. They wore cream straw hats lined with dark-red velvet, and trimmed with coffee lace and dark-red carnations. The bridegroom's present to each was a narrow gold bangle, with Royal Yacht Squadron burgees enamelled under crystal.

COLONEL TURNER and the officers of the 3rd Battalion Gordon Highlanders entertained a large party at the grand lunch in the Municipal Buildings, Aberdeen, on the 26th of August, on the occasion of the presentation of new colours to the regiment by H. R. H. the Prince of Wales. Aberdeen was *en fete*, and the line of the Royal procession from the station to the County Buildings, and from thence to the Link, was a continuation of decorations.

At the station Colonel Turner met his Royal guests, and escorted them to the buildings, where the 850 visitors asked to meet them were assembled. A reception-room was tastefully decorated, and in this the officers awaited the Prince and Princess, who arrived at half-past one o'clock. Shortly afterwards the doors of the banqueting hall were thrown open, and Colonel Turner conducted the Princess to her seat at the luncheon, the Prince of Wales leading Mrs. Turner, Prince Edward following with the Marchioness of Huntly, Prince George with the Countess of Crawford, Earl of Aberdeen, Lord Lieutenant of the county, with Princess Louise, Marquis of Huntly with Princess Maud, and the Lord-Provost of Aberdeen with Princess Victoria.

Colonel Turner, during lunch made an appropriate speech, and proposed the health of the Royal visitors, which was drunk with heartiness, and then the Prince returned thanks, and added some particulars about the fine regiment of which he was colonel.

A ringing cheer followed, and yet another for the Princess, who bowed her acknowledgments.

STATISTICS.

CHOLERA.—The following statistics, furnished by the French Minister of Agriculture, from 1832 to 1866, and by a report drawn up by Dr. Worms on the cholera epidemic of 1873, have a special interest in connection with passing events, as they demonstrate the decrease of mortality in each succeeding cholera epidemic. In the Department of the Seine, in 1832, there were 2,350 deaths per 100,000 inhabitants; in 1849, 1,766 per 100,000 inhabitants; in 1853 and 1854, 826 per 100,000; in 1865 and 1866, 270 per 100,000; in 1877, 37 per 100,000 inhabitants. In the first epidemic, the mortality was less among the civil population than among the military.

THE CULTURE OF THE TOBACCO PLANT.—The statistician of the Bureau of Agriculture at Washington reports that the entire produce of tobacco in the United States in 1882, was 513,077,558 lbs., from 671,532 acres of acreage, an average yield per acre of 764 lbs., and average price 8 1/4c. per pound, making the aggregate value of the entire product 43,189,951 dols. The quantity of domestic leaf used in American manufactures for the year ending December 31, 1883, was 283,829,729 lbs. The quantity taken for American manufacture in 1882 was 166,854,346 lbs. The foreign leaf used by manufacturers from 1872 to 1882 averaged about 7,800,000 lbs. yearly, but the past year (1884) shows a marked increase, amounting to 13,811,140 lbs.

GEMS.

THE desire of appearing persons of ability often prevents our being so.

ONE gains courage by showing himself poor; in that manner one robs poverty of its sharpest sting.

LET friendship creep gently to a height; if it rush to it, it may soon run itself out of breath.

COMMON sense does not ask an impossible chessboard, but takes the one before it, and plays the game.

IT is of the essence of resources that it usually lies dormant, and often unsuspected, until necessity awakens it. It is a draft payable on demand, the very demand being essential to create the assets. In a word, it needs the "power of the moment" to evoke the "power of the man."

HOUSEHOLD TREASURES.

RISsoles.—To make rissoles, take any kind of nice cold roast meat, chop it fine, salt and spice it to taste. Roll a tablespoonful in very thin pastry crust, and fry quickly in butter or lard.

FRESH MEAT IN THE DOG-DAYS.—Meat may be kept for nine or ten days perfectly sweet and good, in the heat of summer, by lightly covering it with bran and suspending it in a high and windy room. A cupboard full of small holes, or a wire safe, that the wind may have a passage through, is advised to be placed in such a room to keep away the flies.

BROWNED EGG PLANT.—Boil an egg-plant in water which has been salted until it is perfectly soft. When done, take it out of the water, cut it in half, and scoop out all the inside; wash it very fine, and to every teaspoonful of mashed egg-plant add one tablespoonful of grated cracker and a dessert-spoonful of butter, with salt and pepper to the taste. Put it in the dish it is to be served in, beat an egg light, spread a portion of it over the egg-plant, then strew on some grated cracker, and, lastly, spread over the remainder of the egg. Set it in the oven and brown it. Serve it hot.

MISCELLANEOUS.

SIMPLE PICTURE FRAMES.—Bare walls give to a room a cold, cheerless air, and in the absence of fine works of art they might be covered with pretty etchings or engravings. Good oil-paintings are expensive and poor ones are abominations, but wood-cuts, etchings and engravings may be culled from magazines and picture-papers and framed at trifling expense. A very pretty set of frames were recently made by a lady. She made frames of pasteboard the size of the picture, and then pasted on rows of mapleleaves. The leaves were small sized, and of a very green tint. An application of varnish was put on and the pictures hung with dark green cords on a library wall. The effect is very pretty, the cardboard being cut out in the shape of the leaves. China cabinets are prized by all young housekeepers, but when purchased they cost more money than many can afford. To make one at home takes a peach crate and have it painted black, then varnish. Bind the edges and shelf with dark red velvet and nail to the wall by a few invisible nails. The china and bric-a-brac may be artistically arranged on this, and no one can detect its being home-made. Sometimes two extra shelves are put in the crate, and these may be taken from another crate or fitted in by a carpenter.

HOW HE ANSWERED.—A certain witty young man has a young sister by the name of Jessie, who was sent to a fashionable school for young ladies. He said when she left home he wondered if she would acquire the airs and affectations that certain young ladies that he knew had by attending the fashionable seminary. After being there a year he began to flatter himself that his sister was proof against such nonsense, when he received a letter signed "Jessica," instead of Jessie, as heretofore. In answering, he wrote something like this:—"Dear Sister Jessica,—Your welcome letter received. Mamma and papa are well. Aunt Mary and Uncle Georgia started for the Santa Cruz Mountains yesterday. Have bought a new horse; it is a beauty; it is named Maudie, &c. Your affectionate brother Samica." The next letter was simply signed Jessie.

A STALWART.—A city man keeps pigeons at his country place near Milton. The birds lived in the barn until recently, when he built a hen-house with a dovecot in its second story. The barn was then boarded up, and the pigeons invited to enter their new home. They untidily refused, and slept in the trees for a week. Then a consultation was held, and all but one adopted the new abode. The one stalwart stayed in the trees a few days longer, and then was seen to fly to a great height in the air and disappear. Some days later he turned up in Waltham, where he was recognised by a man who had reared him, and who had marked his wing. The bird had been near Milton for nearly two years, and had originally been brought there from Waltham in a closed basket.

SEEDSUCKER.—This article is made in Calcutta, of silk and Sea Island cotton, and a whole suit weighs about nineteen ounces. When ordered from the manufacturers it has to be paid for a year in advance, and it is never known what patterns or how much is coming. It is bought by the box, and each box contains fifty pieces, and the pieces may be small or they may be large. They may be blue stripes or buff stripes, or even red stripes. It is all chance, and whatever comes has to be kept. There is no way of sending it back. Sometimes in dressing it with rice water the material becomes discoloured, but it has to be taken just the same. There is no redress. It's a cool heathen garment from a heathen land.

NOTICES TO CORRESPONDENTS.

R. D.—You have done nothing improper or to give offence.

C. D.—Flatted skirts still remain fashionable, and will be probably more worn than ever, now that the accordion skirt has become such a favourite.

R. C.—If you should quietly stop visiting the young lady, the matter would probably regulate itself after a little while.

G. A. H.—The river mentioned is navigable, but we never heard of the individual mentioned, and cannot say whether he owns a steamboat or not.

L. E.—The present Emperor of Germany is William I., son of Frederick William III. The Emperor of Russia is Alexander III.

W.—Do not engage in sentimental correspondence with any young lady until you are engaged to be married.

L. J.—Meru as fashionable as ever. Many dresses are made of creu lawn and embroidery, and the costume is completed by a hat and parasol to match, covered with creu lace.

A. V. W.—Perhaps when number one learns the true state of the case, she will save you further trouble about the matter by declining to have anything more to do with you.

V. L.—Copies of all English wills are kept in the Court of Probate, and can be inspected for a small fee. The cost of obtaining a copy of any particular will would depend on its length.

W. R.—Red silk Jerseys are worn with dark silk skirts. These woven in ribe have long pointed vests of velvet, and hook over the apron-front of sarah skirts matching the Jersey, the vest being in contrast.

M. D.—Have you proposed? Perhaps the young lady has become wearied with professions of love unaccompanied by an offer of marriage. See what effect this would have upon her.

A. F.—If there were no special reasons for hastening the marriage, we think it would. In any case, under such circumstances, the ceremony should be as quiet as possible.

M. C. B.—Do not be in any haste to marry. Wait until you are thoroughly established in business, and have means of your own to support a family. Then you can decide the matter more to your satisfaction. Do not depend upon your parents to support you.

C. L. N.—We do not think that you are enterprising enough to please the widow. If you have been in love for two years, and have neglected to propose and press your suit, we do not think that you will win her, and we advise you to leave the field to the other beau.

O. G. T.—It may be that she wants you to ask her to set the marriage day before she goes home to stay. There would be no harm in your mentioning the subject, and by that means you could probably find out what the trouble is.

B. F. N.—The registering of a trade-mark by a manufacturer does not secure an exclusive right to use it against any one who may have used it prior to its adoption by the first-named firm. Priority of use over all others is essential to the exclusive title to a trade-mark.

H. S.—Do not do anything that you are either afraid or ashamed to tell your mother. Do not engage in any correspondence with a young man with whom you are unacquainted. If the young gentleman is acquainted with your mother he will call upon her if he desires to make your acquaintance.

F. M.—There are persons in London who make it their special business to hunt up unclaimed estates, and they from time to time issue publications as advertising mediums on the subject. The Home Secretary would be the proper person for you to write to for such information as you desire.

C. B. S.—You would have to see the superintendent, and give satisfactory proofs of your ability and trustworthiness. Some companies require a conductor to give security, or else to make a deposit of a certain sum to the guard against his improperly appropriating any money which he collects of the passengers.

C. M. R.—You had better recognise the gentleman when you meet him, but do nothing more. It is the privilege and duty of a lady to bow first, and a gentleman must wait until he is recognised before bowing. Let your friend show a desire to win your favour and renew the intimacy before doing anything to attract him.

A. M.—In such a case the best thing to do is to give the young lady a chance to get over her unfounded suspicion and anger. Just stay away for awhile. You cannot convince her of your faithfulness by any proofs that you can offer. You must allow time to bring about a revulsion of feeling, when she will be likely to be very sorry for her present injustice to you.

W. M.—The only preparation you can make for the stage, besides getting a good general education, is to study elocution and cultivate the voice. There is no routine way of learning acting. Actors and actresses usually have their profession forced on them by their birth and surroundings. Few professions are more crowded, demand more labour, and give fewer returns than an actor's.

L. L.—Continue to take counsel with your mother. With her on your side you will be pretty apt to come out all right in the end.

W. R.—The puffings of back draperies are not so much bunched up at the top as formerly. The puffing is longer, and extends farther down toward the bottom of the skirt. Many draperies are joined to the foot of the overakirt with a band of ribbon, others with a fan-plaiting, and still others crossed like a braid.

W. W.—If you possess great talents you may become famous; other wise you must be content with the better part, that of the humble worker in a private station. Strive to cultivate your natural gifts and go on as if fame did not exist. It may overtake you one of these days when you least expect or care for it.

R. P.—We must confess that, often as we have read about love knots we never saw one, and have no idea how the "ribbon blue" could be "tied into the love knot true." But Dr. Johnson tells us that a love knot is a complicated knot; a sort of love favour, representing mutual attachment.

W. C.—Speaking strictly, A. is right. To appreciate anything is to put a proper value on it, and we may put a proper value, for the first time, on something that is gone from us for ever. However, in ordinary usage, appreciate is only applied to things affecting us at present, and according to this, A. rather appreciates his loss of the view than the view itself.

C. S.—Your case is a pitiful one and deserves sympathy, but strangers who are ignorant of the particulars of it cannot give you the practical advice which you need. Some of those friends whose confidence you say you possess, and who know the possibilities of your case, might be able to help you.

HERE AND THERE.

Here, the anguish and the pain,
There, sweet peace and rest we gain;
Here, the heartache and the sin;
There, the golden crown we win;
Here, the waves beat high and wide,
There, no roar of troubled tide;
Here, the hand, the blow, the rod,
There, we see 'twas all from God;
Here, we suffer, weep, and pray,
There, God wipes each tear away;
Here, with friends we're called to part,
There, we meet them heart to heart;
Here, deceit and treachery cold,
There, we walk the streets of gold;
Here, our hearts with anguish riven,
There, eternal rest in heaven.

W.

R. A.—If the ink is really common writing ink you can restore it by painting over it with a camel's hair brush, a solution of gallic acid. Another method is to apply, in the same manner, a solution of potassium ferrocyanide, or, as it is sometimes called, the yellow prussiate of potash. But common writing ink is seldom used to mark cloth.

L. C. F.—Lovely hats for garden parties are made of sprigged organdie shirred over fine milliner's reeds, with about an inch between each runner. The wide brims are lined with two rows of lace laid one over the other, the edge of the last row extending about half an inch beyond the rim of the hat. A wreath of flowers goes around the crown, and the same are worn on the corsage.

W. S. N.—The mothers of Jacob and Esau were the wives of Cain and Seth, the sons of Adam and Eve. Their names are not mentioned in the Bible. From the nature of the case we infer that they were of the family of Adam and Eve, and the exceptional circumstances in which they were placed made a marriage proper, which afterwards was forbidden.

K. P.—You are very unfortunate if you love very dearly a young man who thinks so lightly of love and marriage as to enter into such an engagement as you describe. How do you know how long his love for you will last? Have a clear explanation both with him and your friends, and make sure, as far as you can, that he knows his mind this time before you marry him. A man who loves so lightly is not likely to love very deeply or very lastingly.

V. P.—To prepare a bird-skin for stuffing, the implements required are a surgeon's scalpel (or a pen-knife will do), three pieces of annealed wire, sharpened at one end to a cutting point, stiffened with cotton, some tow, a pair of tweezers, pliers, a spool of thread, and a preserving mixture, composed of two parts of salt and one of alum. Lay the bird on its back, and part the feathers so as to make an incision from the end of the breast-bone to the tail, being careful not to cut through the walls of the abdomen. Sprinkle seawater in the cut to absorb the moisture. Raise the skin on one side of the incision, and press the flesh away from it. Much of the skinning may be done by the aid of a piece of wood shaped like a spatula. With this press the skin gently from the body till the leg is reached, then push it up through the skin, and sever it at the joint thus brought to view; repeat the same process on the other side of the body. Cut through the flesh and backbone to the skin of the back, using every care to save all the tail feathers. Proceed with the skinning to the wings, and sever them from the body at the second joint. Skin nearly to the base of the bill, removing the eyes and ears very carefully. Separate the neck by cutting a nearly square place in the base of the skull and jaw, which will allow the neck to be withdrawn, together

with the tongue and some of the brains. Remove all remaining matter from the skull, and sprinkle freely with the salt and alum compound. Place a small piece of cotton in the eye orbits to keep them open. The "tanning" is performed by rubbing the above mixture into the skin till every part is thoroughly saturated with it. Take measurements of the skinned body, and on a piece of wire, which should be two inches longer than the bird, place the low; winding it with the thread, and shaping it after the form of the skinned bird from the measurements taken. Insert this false body in the skin, running the sharpened end of the wire up through the centre of the skull, clipping it off when the skin is dry. The remaining wires are thrust in the bottom of the foot, up through the leg, and firmly secured in the body. Sew up the cut in the abdomen, dressing the feathers nicely over it. Open the bill and fill the head with cotton; insert artificial eyes, fasten the feet wires to the perch, and finally bend the body into a natural position. Ask your newsdealer to procure a taxidermist's manual for you.

R. T. D.—You would be very foolish to take any mention, it is customary for a gentleman to wait until he gets an introduction to a young lady in the ordinary way; and then, with the approval of her family, either pay his addresses to her by personal visits, or else solicit the favour of a correspondence with her. To attempt to get into correspondence with a lady by newspaper advertisements, or by any means except such as her parents would approve, is highly improper.

C. I. M.—Under the circumstances which you mention, it is customary for a gentleman to wait until he gets an introduction to a young lady in the ordinary way; and then, with the approval of her family, either pay his addresses to her by personal visits, or else solicit the favour of a correspondence with her. To attempt to get into correspondence with a lady by newspaper advertisements, or by any means except such as her parents would approve, is highly improper.

R. R. F.—You should let the young gentleman know, in as kind a way as possible, that you do not like to receive presents from him, but if you have been in the habit of accepting his gifts it would be harsh to return one of them without warning. It is a good rule for a young lady never to accept presents from young men, except those which custom makes proper—flowers, bonbons, and so forth. A lady is not expected to make presents to men at all.

R. S.—When there has been no wedding reception, the evening "At Home" takes its place, and is conducted in a good deal the same way. The bride usually wears her wedding dress, and often the bridesmaids and groomsmen stand near her, for the first part of the evening. The refreshments are served in the back-parlour, the servants merely attending at the table, and the gentlemen bring the ladies what they wish. We do not see, however, how your mourning can permit an evening at home if it prevents a wedding reception.

C. N. T.—They first became important about the end of the twelfth century. In 1371 the head of the family was made an earl, in 1633 a marquis, and in 1705 duke. The title became extinct, but in 1791 George 18th Earl of Morton, who represented a branch of the Douglass family, had the title of Baron Douglass conferred on him. Doubtless there were marriages between the houses of Douglass and Argyle, but there is no immediate relationship between the Earls of Douglass and the Marquis of Lorne: S. Hohenzollern or Zollern, and Brunswick, respectively.

M. R.—Hobbes is the name given to the principles of Thomas Hobbes, a noted English philosopher of the seventeenth century. He believed in an absolute monarchy, to which should be given supreme control over everything connected with law, morals, and religion. Some of his disciples assumed that his doctrines taught that a monarch's opinion is the test of true religion and true morality. The monarchs and their partisans especially maintained this view, but the liberals denied that Hobbes could be truthfully charged with having taught such a doctrine. Many of the clergy opposed the doctrine, on the ground that the church and her ministers could alone decide up on religious and moral questions. The doctrine has become obsolete in all free countries.

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